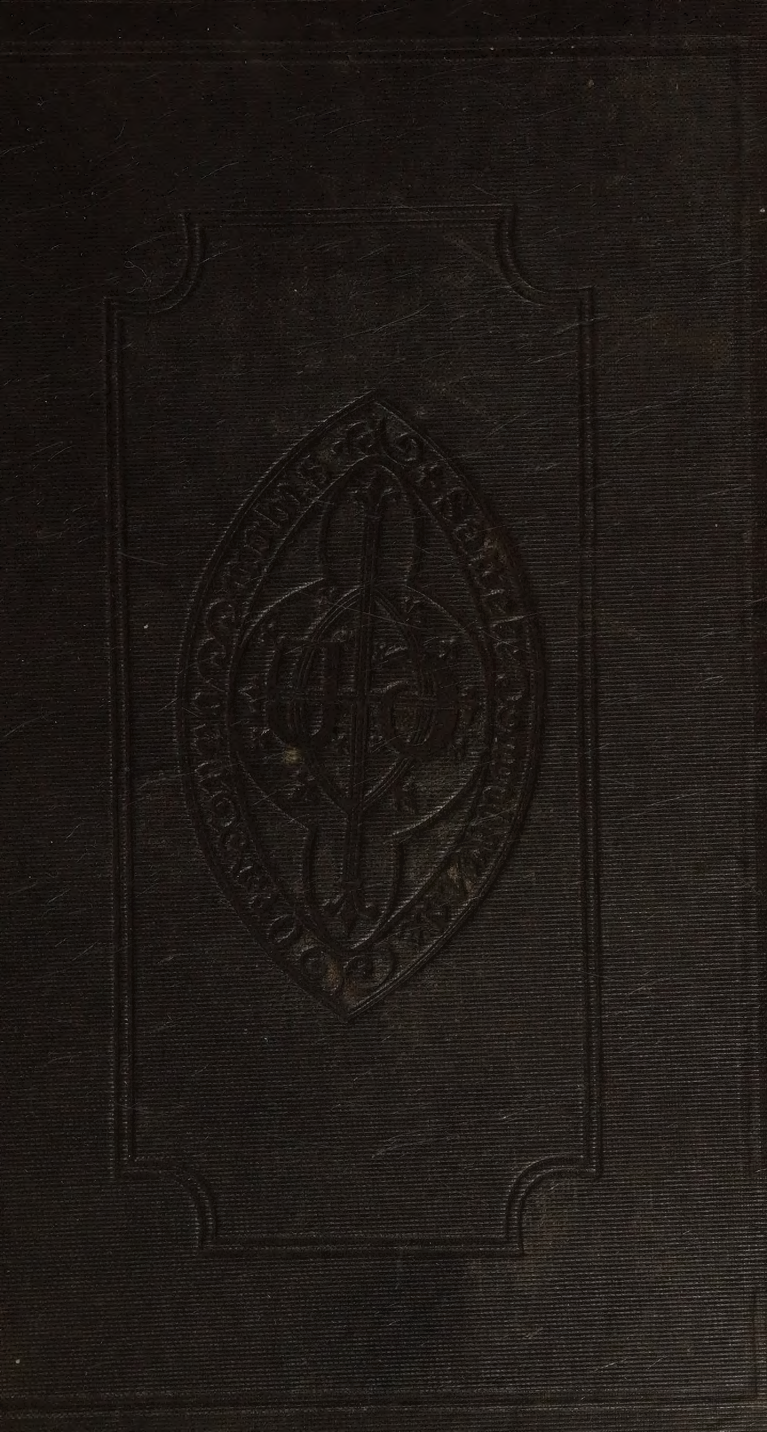

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The Saints and Servants of God.

THE LIFE

OF

S. ALPHONSO MARIA DE LIGUORI,

BISHOP OF ST. AGATHA OF THE GOTHS,

AND FOUNDER OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER.

"Gaude Maria Virgo, cunctas hæreses sola interemisti in universo mundo."—*Antiph. Ecclesiæ.*

PERMISSU SUPERIORUM.

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M. DCCC. XLIX.

We hereby approve of this Series of Lives of the Canonized Saints and Servants of God, and recommend it to the faithful of our District, as likely to promote the glory of God, the increase of devotion, and the spread of our holy Religion.

Given at Birmingham, this 29th day of October, 1847.

Thomas
Bishop of Comboopolis

Nicholas
Bishop of Melipotamus

Ac. 4740

TO

THE REGULAR CLERGY

OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ENGLAND,

THE CHILDREN
OF ST. BENEDICT AND ST. BERNARD,
ST. DOMINICK AND ST. FRANCIS,
AND THE SONS
OF THE HOLY IGNATIUS,
THE GREAT MASTER OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE,
AND THE NURSING-FATHER OF SAINTS AND MARTYRS,

WHO,

IN THE STRAITNESS AND NEGLECT
OF THEIR UNHONOURED CLOISTERS,
OR THE CHEERLESS SOLITUDE
OF THEIR HIRED LODGING,
HAVE JOYFULLY EMBRACED THE POVERTY OF JESUS,
AND EARNED BY LOVING ZEAL

THE CROWN OF MARTYRDOM,

AND WHO,
THROUGH SCENES OF AWFUL SACRILEGE,
AND TIMES OF BITTER PERSECUTION,
THROUGH THE LONG AND WEARY VISITATION
OF ACTIVE MALICE OR OF COLD CONTEMPT,

HAVE PERPETUATED,

AMONGST THEIR UNWORTHY COUNTRYMEN,
THE BLESSED LINEAGE

OF THEIR HOLY FOUNDERS.

St. Wilfrid's,
Feast of St. Bernard,
M. DCCC. XLVII.

INTRODUCTION.

God, in His admirable conduct in the redemption of mankind and the government of human society, never fails to raise up great and holy men to defend His Holy Church against all the attacks of her enemies, and to provide in her bosom the most proper and efficacious remedies for all the wants and evils of humanity at every stage of its existence. This is the meaning of the lives and labours of such extraordinary men as St. Athanasius, St. Augustine, St. Gregory VII., and of the institutions of St. Francis of Assisium, St. Dominick, and St. Ignatius Loyola.

St. Ignatius, the man raised up by Providence for the sixteenth century, received with his companions the great task of refuting and overthrowing, by their zeal for the true faith and their profound learning, the errors and falsehoods every-

where preached and published by the heresiarch Luther and his no less rebellious associates. He effected it too; for in less than a half century after the founding of the Society of Jesus, Ignatius and his children had arrested the spread of error, and had driven back into its last retrenchments that heresy which seemed ready to cover and paganise the whole world with the spirit of darkness.

Protestantism, vanquished on its own ground with the arms of faith and science in the open field of debate and controversy, did not cease, however, to work its way into the heart, and infect and corrupt the morals of a great portion of all classes of society; for it is the invariable law of all heresy to degenerate into vice, incredulity, and materialism.

Who now is the man of God to make head against these evils? What now are their providential remedies?

In due time the Almighty did not fail to bring forth a man eminently endowed with all the qualities necessary to execute His vast designs; one who was fitted to exercise an immense influence upon the

world during his life and after his death. This man was St. Alphonso Maria de Liguori.

St. Alphonso united in his person all that was capable to elevate him in the sight of heaven and earth. Sprung from one of the noblest families of Italy, he possessed all that could make him dear and agreeable to society. Besides the most rare talents of nature, there were seen to shine in him the most eminent virtues. To these natural and supernatural qualities God had added the most marvellous gifts of grace. Called at the age of thirty to begin his remarkable mission, it was not long before he saw the fearful evils caused, both to the Church and to the state, by Protestantism, and its natural offspring, Jansenism and infidelity.

This inspired him on the one hand with the design of combating error with his pen, which he did in such a way as to make him worthy of a distinguished rank among the fathers and doctors of the Church; and on the other so inflamed his heart with zeal, that it gave him such a wonderful power in preaching the Gospel,

as to earn him a place among the foremost apostles of Christianity.

St. Alphonso was labouring among the poor souls of Christ in a small town of Italy, when God by a special revelation to one of His devout servants made known the great work for which He had especially destined him. This servant of God, eminent in sanctity and favoured with supernatural gifts, saw in a vision a new Congregation of priests, who were employed in the care of thousands of souls destitute of spiritual aid, and St. Alphonso at their head. And she heard a voice, which said, "This is the soul I have chosen to be the instrument of My glory in this great work." St. Alphonso was struck with the remarkable conformity between her vision and the thoughts which previously had occupied his mind, and encouraged by interior lights, by the advice of experienced and holy individuals, and unequivocal signs from heaven, he determined at length to do what God required of him. He laid therefore the foundations of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in the town of

Scala, in the year of our Lord, 1732. He proposed to form a society of Priests animated with a great zeal, who would willingly embrace an apostolic life conformable to the life of Jesus Christ—their object being, first, their own sanctification, by the sedulous imitation of the virtues and examples of Jesus Christ in a life of perfect community under the vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity; and, secondly, the sanctification of the clergy and laity, more especially by assisting the souls most destitute of spiritual aid, through the means of missions, retreats, and other spiritual exercises. Behold there the providential remedy; for just as St. Francis, St. Dominick, and St. Ignatius were called by God to answer the wants and remedy the evils of their own time, so was St. Alphonso raised up by God to meet ours.

A work which was intended by God to awaken a new zeal and greater fervour among the faithful of His Church, and to fight against the two extremes, rigorism and impiety; a work which was to procure the salvation of souls, not in Italy

only, but in all the other kingdoms of Europe and in America, could not fail to stir up the powers of hell to labour for its overthrow. But all the efforts of the evil one proved vain. In a short period the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer spread itself in the kingdoms of Naples, Sicily, and the Pontifical States; and St. Alphonso himself had the extreme joy, as says Father Tannoja, to see his children cross the Alps, and he declared that God would not fail to procure by their means His glory in these countries. And it was for the universal Church, the whole world, that the Vicar of Jesus Christ approved not only the rules and constitutions, but the Congregation itself.

Experience has already confirmed the prediction of St. Alphonso and the intention of the Holy See. Poland was the first to gather the fruits of the zeal of St. Alphonso's children; next came Austria; from thence the Congregation spread itself into Switzerland, France, Belgium, Bavaria, and Holland. The Redemptorists then crossed the Atlantic, and founded a

number of houses in the United States of North America, and they lately have entered upon the soil of the once Isle of the Saints.

Now what countries of the north have suffered more from the ravages of Protestantism? in what countries are there to be found more souls destitute of all spiritual aid, than in England and the United States of North America? Indeed, in Great Britain alone there are more souls destitute of spiritual aid than in the whole of Italy; so that it may be said with truth, that in the designs of Providence St. Alphonso founded the Congregation of Missionary Priests for the whole world, but more especially for this country, since here are found *en masse* in large towns and cities what he saw scattered abroad in the whole kingdom of Italy in small villages and hamlets. Moreover, this is conformable to the prediction of St. Alphonso to one of his companions, who feared the ruin of the Congregation on account of the persecutions which were at that time excited against them. He then plainly declared that the Congrega-

tion would prosper much after his death, that there would be a great number of houses, but that these happy events would take place above all in the countries of the north. We have therefore a great and firm confidence that the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer is called not only to procure a great good to God by the salvation of souls in England, but also to aid powerfully, by its united energy and action, and by its zeal and labours, to restore England to her ancient faith and to the bosom of her holy mother, from which she was so violently torn, and thus to elevate her to the glorious rank she once occupied among the Catholic nations of the world.

The history and plan of action of the Congregation of Redemptorists in England is, in short, as follows:

The first solicitation to establish the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in England was made by the Right Rev. Dr. Baines, in 1838, who was then Vicar Apostolic of England. In 1842 the first mission was accepted at Falmouth, in Cornwall, under the jurisdiction of Dr.

Baines, where two fathers with a lay-brother entered in 1843. In the following year another mission was opened in the Central District, at Blackmore Park, Worcester, under the auspices of the Right Rev. Dr. Walsh, V. A. The places in the environs are visited by the fathers of Blackmore Park, and it is projected to establish another mission in the same district. In August last it was decided to establish, with the episcopal authority, a house in London. The Right Rev. Dr. Wiseman, governing this district, favoured this enterprise with all his power and credit, and Dr. Walsh, who was afterwards named V. A., approved entirely what his coadjutor and successor had begun.

Conformably to the rules and spirit of our Congregation, in the churches attached to our houses there will be kept up a permanent mission.

At different houses destined for that purpose, spiritual retreats will be given, both to the clergy and laity.

In proportion as the number of our Fathers increase we shall be able to give

missions and retreats, at the demand of the clergy, to the people; and also, at the demand of proper authority, to the clergy, to religious communities, and colleges.

As the spirit and letter of our constitutions oblige us to live in community, this circumstance will prevent us from allowing the Fathers to reside at small missions. However, this will be compensated by the great advantages which will result from the establishment of communities according to our rules; for the Fathers, without losing the benefits of a cloistered life, will thus be able to supply the spiritual necessities of the places in their environs until the number of Catholics shall become sufficient to make a resident priest possible and permanent.

FR. DE HELD,
SUPERIOR OF THE REDEMPTORIST FATHERS IN ENGLAND.

Festival of St. Philip and St. James, Apostles.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The Lives of the Companions of St. Alphonso Liguori will be published on July 24th. They will be followed by the fifth and concluding volume of the Life of St. Alphonso on the 24th of August. Benedict XIV. on Heroic Virtue is in the press, and will appear shortly.

The Oratory, London.
Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, 1849.

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THE LIFE

OF

ST. ALPHONSO LIGUORI.

BOOK III. CONTINUED.

CHAPTER LVII.

Mgr. Liguori had always the greatest respect for the regular orders; he fully appreciated the services which several religious of exemplary conduct rendered him in the administration of his diocese, but he could not endure those who transgressed the rule of their institute, and destroyed the good he endeavoured to effect in the diocese by their scandalous conduct. "Edifying religious," he said, "are a consolation to bishops and priests, but if they are imperfect and irregular, they are a burthen to their bishops and a misfortune to the people." When he met with such, he did all he could in order to amend them: "for," said he, "if they are not cured, their malady will be communicated to others." He was in the habit of saying, that what one notices in regard to fruits generally happens in communities; "those who are bad

spoil the good by contact with them, and in order to avoid the loss of all, it is necessary to throw the bad away."*

As soon as he entered the diocese, Alphonso made war against all dissolute monks, and freed the monasteries from them. But however great was his anxiety on the subject, he could not succeed in rooting out all these noxious weeds from his field. On his Lordship's arrival there was a regular priest, of a respectable family, who was a dishonour to his order; Alphonso sent for him to his palace and gave him a paternal admonition; but on seeing that he did not alter his conduct, he got him to leave the diocese of his own accord. As this religious enjoyed the favour of his superior general, this latter endeavoured to defend him. Other great personages also wished to intercede in his favour; but Alphonso persisted, and the religious was obliged to leave the monastery and the diocese. In the year 1769, when his Lordship was at Naples, he was asked to allow this religious to return; the Duke of Maddalon came to solicit this in person. "Even supposing all the reports about him were well found-

*The diocese of St. Agatha contained a great many religious orders at that time. Among others, were to be found the fathers of Mount Olivet, and those of Monte Vergine, the Dominicans, Augustinians, the reformed Conventuals, and the Capuchins. There were also the religious of St. John of God. Formerly the Virginian fathers, those of St. Basil, the Benedictines of Mount Cassino, the Carmelite monks and those of Citeaux were to be found at St. Agatha. As it was a celebrated town, they liked to reside in it. At present, 1800, this town only contains one monastery, that of the Conventual fathers, and a hospital of the Benfratelli.

ed," he said, "he has not acted in this way for such a long time, and then he is now so much older!" He could gain nothing. "As long as I am bishop," said Alphonso to him, "he shall not enter my diocese again."

Having heard of the existence of certain relations of too intimate a sort between a procurator* and a lady, he sent for his abbot and told him that this monk must leave the diocese. The superior took the part of the procurator, and maintained, though it was false, that he was not guilty, and protested that he could not remove him. This resistance displeased his Lordship, so he then assumed a tone of authority, and said to him, "Then I will make him go myself." He showed so much firmness that the abbot made up his mind to yield, and the religious was transferred elsewhere without loss of time.

Having heard that another religious kept up a scandalous connexion, and wishing to discover whether his suspicions were well grounded, he caused his grand-vicar to make inquiries about it among trust-worthy people: when he was convinced that all he had heard was true he informed the provincial of it; but he took no notice of the warning, although he did not attempt to justify the subject openly. Alphonso was not offended at it, but he addressed a second letter to him to let him know that if he did not make

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* A name given to the religious who attends to the provisions in a monastery

a point of repairing his negligence as he ought, he would expose himself to having measures adopted against him which he would find anything but agreeable. The provincial got alarmed at this energy, and sent the brother into a monastery out of the diocese.

Another religious frequented a family of high rank too assiduously; Alphonso urged his superior to send the religious into another monastery; but he spoke as to a deaf person, and as just considerations prevented his then authoritatively exacting what he had asked, he determined on at least depriving the superior of the faculties to hear confessions. He sent for him, and said to him, "How can you feed the flocks of others, if you allow wolves to ravage your own with impunity?" His Lordship, however, was not satisfied until this religious was out of his diocese.

On another occasion he complained to a provincial of the scandalous conduct of one of his religious, who instead of giving satisfaction to the bishop, endeavoured to defend the culprit, while he accused the local superior of being dissolute. "If he is so," replied his Lordship ironically, "why leave him at the head of the monastery?" It is right to mention that the superior had himself denounced the scandal to his Lordship, but Alphonso kept this secret; he did not feel at rest about it until after the expulsion of the guilty subject.

He tried to effect the expulsion of a religious out of a monastery in his diocese whose mis-

conduct had become public, and of whose amendment there was no cause to hope; but in vain; he then wrote to the provincial, saying, "This monastery has tormented me ever since I entered the diocese. I did not accept the bishopric in order to be damned myself or to see others lost; if your Reverence does not apply a remedy to this, I shall have recourse to the king, however displeased you may be at it, and I shall obtain the just satisfaction which you refuse me." The note frightened the provincial, and nothing more was needed in order to cause the religious to be transferred into another place.

Such were the ordinary methods Alphonso used in order to purge the monasteries from religious who were a dishonour to them; but when the provincials in particular would not assist him, he had recourse to more rigorous measures, and in order not to do anything to the prejudice of regulars, he applied at Rome to the general of the order to which the culprit belonged.

Not being able to get a provincial on one occasion to change the monastery of one of his religious who lived in it in a scandalous manner, he applied to the general, who immediately displaced him, and even ordered that he should be banished to the most distant monastery of the province; however this wretched man succeeded in being settled at Naples, through the aid of another religious who had power, and he there recommenced his disorders. When Alphonso heard that sin was thus countenanced,

he complained of it to the guilty patron, and threatened to have recourse to the superiors at Naples. "Mgr. Liguori," replied the irritated religious, "gives himself unnecessary trouble; the person in question is no longer under his jurisdiction." He believed this to be the case, but Alphonso was of a different opinion. "If this religious is not my subject," he replied to him, "his accomplice is one of my flock." He immediately wrote to him and so energetically, that the religious left Naples, and the sin ceased with the occasion, which had resulted from the vicinity of the two places.

There was a superior who was a scandal to his community and to the whole neighbourhood. The provincial would not grant Alphonso any satisfaction, so the general was informed of it, and the appeal to him was so efficacious, that to his great displeasure the superior was deposed, and compelled to retire into a very distant monastery.

Though contrary to his wishes, his Lordship was sometimes obliged to implore the intervention of the king, when he met with negligence even in the generals. A religious led a disorderly life; his Lordship first informed the provincial of it, and then the general, and not being able to obtain anything from either of them, he represented the disorder which existed to the king, through Pascal dell' Acqua, the governor of the place: the religious was expelled from the province, by virtue of a royal decree, and at the same time the person who had shared in his disorders.

Another religious had rendered himself but too well known through his scandalous conduct; Alphonso was not able to get the provincial even to listen to him, so he had recourse to the general, who replied to him, almost weeping, "You know that we are no longer looked on as belonging to the kingdom; our religious even no longer care for us; therefore, in regard to the scandal of which you speak to me, I must beg you to apply to the competent authorities at Naples." His Lordship groaned over the unhappy state of the times. He had recourse to the king, and obtained what he wanted.

Alphonso took as much pleasure in being able to honour by his kindness those religious who proved worthy of their vocation, as he was resolute in punishing those who were dissolute and unworthy. He entrusted them with important employments, and chose them for the synodal examiners. It was to them that he confided the care of the convents; he liked to send them to preach during Lent in divers places, and often consulted them and rewarded their merit. The Capuchin fathers especially, of whom he had never any cause to complain, were those he loved the best. All those who were impure were held in abomination by Alphonso, but he could not endure even the shadow of this sin in the person of a confessor. Man is full of inconstancy, and one cannot tell in the morning what he will be in the evening. Thus he granted faculties to several subjects who at the time were worthy of his confidence, but who af-

terwards caused him the deepest regret. A Benedictine presented himself to obtain faculties for confession; Alphonso approved him, and that most kindly, because he was exemplary and zealous. Some time afterwards, he was informed that this Benedictine had committed an act of levity; he immediately complained of it to his abbot; as the offence was not of a kind to deserve indulgence, the abbot, in order to spare himself and his Lordship from all fresh annoyance, sent the religious into another monastery.

Alphonso took pleasure in sometimes conversing with a religious who led an edifying life; he said he was a relation of Mgr. Mastrilli, Archbishop of Tarento: he also gave him his faculties. On afterwards hearing that he frequented a certain house of improper character, he immediately forbade him to enter the confessional, and also obliged him to change his place of residence. "When a person converses with a penitent out of the confessional," said he, "he takes dangerous liberties, and if mischief is not done at first, it will assuredly be so in the end."

After all that we have already related in order to show his Lordship's vigilance and severity in regard to religious, we have however mentioned but a small part of what he did in this respect during his episcopate.

In the year 1768 alone, when he especially laboured to purify the monasteries, he expelled as many as fifty-two religious, according to the testimony of Father Caputo. "He was so soli-

citous that the life led by religious should be an exemplary one," said the grand-vicar Rubini, "that he took no rest when he saw any one deviate from the right path. He paid no attention to toleration or human respect on such occasions; and whatever might be the rank of the religious or of his order, after having taken all the measures which prudence required, he acted without any respect of persons or fear. The superiors of the orders knew him too well, and they often hastened to send away certain subjects who were displeasing to him of their own accord. I can truly say that during his Lordship's time, the monasteries of the diocese were as so many gardens, where all breathed forth the sweet odours of innocence and virtue."

CHAPTER LVIII.

Alphonso waged an equally severe warfare against the laity, whose irregularities were an injury to religion and morality. "I am not merely the shepherd of priests and religious," said he; "they form but a part of my flock. The flock confided to bishops includes all classes; God has committed all these souls to us, and we must render Him an account of them." Archdeacon Rainone said to me on this subject, in expressions of pious exaggeration, "The parishes of the diocese did not contain as many

souls as his Lordship had careful spies there, and one may safely say, that scandals were remedied before they were known." "We may rest assured," said the priest Don Pascal Bartolini, "that there never was a bishop in the world who employed himself in putting a stop to offences against God and in procuring the good of the faithful with more ardour than Mgr. Liguori. He held sin in such abomination, that he was implacable in hunting it out, even from its most hidden intrenchments."

Those magistrates and syndics of the villages who aided him, as we have before seen, in doing away with the scandals of his clergy, were those who principally lent him their assistance in stopping the disorders of the laity. "It was with tears in his eyes that his Lordship recommended us to seek after the glory of God and the happiness of families," said Don Nicholas Pisani, intendant of the Duke of Maddalon, and at that time mayor of the duke's state. "You can do what I cannot do," he said to us; "you can remedy everything, for you are on the spot; you can do more than the king." It is difficult to imagine how much these magistrates aided Alphonso; for as they had it at heart to gain their bishop's esteem, they neglected nothing which could gratify him. "We can testify," said Canon Verzalla and Brother Francis Anthony, "that his Lordship spent a good part of his revenues in making presents to persons who could inform him of existing scandals."

All the priests unite in saying that they had no further trouble to take, when any scandal happened in their parish, than to inform the bishop of it; he himself did all that had to be done regarding it....He sent for the culprits, and if he could do nothing with them, he immediately had recourse to the barons, and implored the intervention of the king in case of need; he possessed so much influence with the lords, that he caused chastisements to be inflicted in the diocese which till then had been unheard of: thus debauched women were sent away from the places they lived in, they went through severe imprisonments, were beaten with rods, or condemned to exile. Before coming to these extremities, Alphonso made it a rule to try all the methods he could adopt as a father in the first place. He sent several times if needful for the offender, and whether peasant or gentleman reprimanded and threatened him. If that were not enough, he had recourse to the interposition of the friends of the guilty one, or of those who had influence over him; the corrections were sometimes not unaccompanied by gloomy predictions. The notary Nicholas Mazzola of Durazzano distressed him by his misconduct; after he had reprimanded him several times, and always without success, he said to him one day, "My son, the life you lead will bring you to a deplorable end," and putting his hand on his shoulder, he repeated almost weeping, "Yes! you will die a tragic death." This unhappy man went from bad to worse, and

at length, although at an advanced age, he was involved in the conspiracy of the Jacobins, and was condemned to lose his head on the scaffold in the January of 1800. While he was waiting for the moment of punishment in the chapel, he said weeping to one of the white monks, "This death was foretold to me in my youth, by Mgr. Liguori." This reflection caused him to enter into himself with serious thought, and this man, who had till then been hardened, died full of penitence invoking the saint in heaven.

As soon as Alphonso was convinced of the inutility of correction, he adopted rigorous measures. On hearing that two brothers at Airola kept two women of bad character with them, he adopted all the plans which his anxiety could suggest; but on seeing that he obtained nothing, he had recourse to the Prince de la Riccia. "I see no other remedy," he wrote to him, "whereby to put a stop to this scandal, than to implore the goodness of your Excellency." By the prince's orders, the two brothers were arrested, and kept in confinement for a long while, as well as the women, who were afterwards banished from their country and from every part of the prince's state. At his request the prince also punished a criminal of Forchia and a woman of Arpaja; they were both married; but after the chastisement they both resumed their criminal habits, in despite of all authority. Alphonso could not be severe upon them, because of their being married, so he asked the prince to aid him; the woman was punished, and the man had to pass

several months in prison. The priest Don Felix Nuzzo informed him that in a house in his parish, in the country called Della Cave, a goat-herd, who was a man of formidable strength, had a criminal meeting every night: his Lordship sent for the officer of the Duke of Maddalon, and gave him twelve carlins, with an order to put the culprit in prison; but one of the soldiers of his band warned the goat-herd of it, and on the following night, when his superior went to the place to seize him, he was not there. However, he met a married man in the court of the house who also lived licentiously. The officer wished to do something to please his Lordship, so he seized this man and his accomplice, and imprisoned them. Alphonso rejoiced at it: "If one object of pursuit has escaped me, I have caught another," said he. The goat-herd never appeared again. As to the imprisoned culprit, he promised to amend, and he was set at liberty, at the entreaties of his wife; but the accomplice was obliged to remain in prison for three months. Alphonso supplied her with what she required for her maintenance day by day, and sent several priests to visit her to try and convert her; and she repented and continued to live in a Christian way.

A villager named Ambrose Ciaolone, who had not profited by his Lordship's remonstrances, was killed by a rival in a house of debauchery. His corpse was thrown before the monastery of the Conventual Fathers, where it was found at break of day. When his Lordship heard of it, he shed

tears; but in order to strike sinners with a salutary terror, he ordered that, in consequence of the interdict which had fallen on this man, his body should be ignominiously carried between four lighted torches and cast into a ditch.

His solicitude was even still greater in regard to gentlemen of rank; his Lordship looked on their sin as a double one, on account of the influence of their example on the people. There was a gentleman of Airola, who had contracted a criminal connexion; his Lordship, who was in the town at the time, was informed of it; he immediately tried all the methods he could, in order to bring him to Jesus Christ; this was at first unsuccessful in regard to the gentleman, but not so as regarded his accomplice. The infatuated culprit entered into a fresh connexion of the same sort; as soon as his Lordship was informed of this fresh intrigue, (it was one evening just as he came down from the pulpit,) the tears came into his eyes, and he addressed a gentleman who was also a priest, earnestly begging him to go to see the unhappy man as from him, to represent the enormity of his sin to him, and the great sorrow it caused him. The relapsed criminal could not resist such paternal goodness this time, he entered into himself with seriousness, and came and cast himself in penitence at his Lordship's feet. He was informed that a physician at St. Agatha had improper relations with the mistress of the hospital; he did all he could to convert him, but on finding that his remonstrances were useless, he wrote

to Don Joseph Romano, the president of the council and superintendant of the house of the late duke. He dismissed the doctor from his employment, who thereupon came in a fury to his Lordship, and loaded him with a thousand invectives. "My son," said Alphonso to him, "you brought this misfortune on yourself; remember how many times I reproved you with mildness and charity, but you were deaf to my voice; if I have had recourse to a more powerful arm, it has not been through passion, but on account of the scruples which allowing you to go on in sin caused me."

Alphonso's distress was especially great when he heard of the irregularities of a married man, on account of the misery of his poor wife, and still more of the contempt of the sacrament. A gentleman of the diocese, although married, caused both scandal to the public and affliction to his family. After having made vain efforts to remedy this, Alphonso at length applied to the king; the gentleman was cited before the tribunal of Montefusco, and compelled to put an end to his disorders. After which, in order to place his accomplice out of the temptation of sinning thus again, his Lordship assigned her a pension; she was converted and persevered.

He reprimanded a surgeon of Arienzo several times over, but with no effect. He was the father of a family, but he kept up a criminal connexion. Alphonso gave information of it to the king; the culprit was arrested, and brought before the tribunal of Campagna. After a long

imprisonment he manifested sentiments of repentance, and was set at liberty; but in spite of his promises he relapsed into his former sin. His Lordship gave information of this to the tribunal, and the surgeon was immediately put in prison, where having heard that his Lordship was striving to get his accomplice to enter into a house of refuge at Nola, he hastened to prevent her doing so, trying to get her to oppose the plan on the plea of health; he at the same time commissioned an unworthy confidant to watch her and inform him as to her constancy. His Lordship grieved over such wickedness; he sent for an usher from Montefusco to finish the proceedings. The culprit underwent a long detention, and did not obtain his release until he had given satisfactory proofs of repentance.

At Airola there was a gentleman who had lived a dissipated life for some time, to the great scandal of his children and of their mother, whom he had banished far from him. From the time of his entrance into the diocese, Alphonso had never omitted any opportunity of warning him; but all was in vain. The gentleman relied on the credit he enjoyed; he remained obstinate and despised his Lordship. Alphonso was not able to tolerate his crime any longer, and he was moved with compassion towards his unfortunate wife, so he had recourse to the Prince de la Riccia, whose vassal the gentleman was. The prince in turn made use of all sorts of methods to lead him to serious thought. He caused the companion of his debaucheries to be

punished and banished, but, instead of amending, the gentleman only treated his wife more harshly: the prince in concert with Alphonso, drew up a report of his misconduct, and brought him before the high court of justice, who sentenced him to a long imprisonment. Alphonso believed that he would amend at last, and asked for his pardon from the prince, at the request of his afflicted wife; but he knew him better, and on the 12th of August, 1766, thus replied to him: "The character of this man is too inconstant; even in the very prison where he is shut up, he has not ceased to have improper connexions. This proves that chastisement is so far from subduing him, that it only hardens him. No, no! I will not answer for it either to God or man. Your Lordship can act in his favour if you think right, but such is my resolution; it was your pastoral zeal which excited me to act as I did concerning him." Alphonso shuddered to hear of such obduracy; the gentleman lived on in prison for many a long year, and he died there in his blindness.

On another part of the prince's property, there was another gentleman who had sent away his wife in order that he might give himself up more freely to crime; Alphonso warned him and begged him to live with his wife again, but he would not hear of it. His Lordship therefore addressed a petition to his majesty. The gentleman then feared the consequences of his conduct, and pretended to renounce his disorders in order to put a stop to

the proceedings against him. But when his Lordship discovered the feint, he had recourse to the prince, who caused the gentleman and his accomplice to be arrested. At length they both, thanks to a severe imprisonment, conceived a horror for sin and were sincerely converted. Alphonso's zeal was such that he would have given his life in order to destroy sin. A gentleman of high standing, whose conduct was extremely scandalous, on seeing that his Lordship thwarted him in his excesses, went to him, and transported with anger, reproached him for not leaving him alone. Alphonso only answered by still stronger threats, and declared to him that he would inform the king of him; at these words the gentleman got up in a great fury, he loaded his Lordship with invectives, and made a gesture as if he meant to draw his sword. The alarm which he spread caused all the people of the house to run into his room, where they found Alphonso perfectly calm before his aggressor. "Ill-treat me," he said to him, "abuse me if you like: I do my duty: I did not accept the episcopate in order to be damned. Would to God that I might have the honour to die a martyr! My dear child, I pity you! return from your evil ways; but know that I will never let you rest in your sin."

A gentleman, in giving him notice one day of a great disorder which took place in his country, manifested a fear that this information might have vexatious consequences as regarded himself: "I am not afraid," Alphonso replied, "I,

who must make the report to the king; and you fear, you who tell me the thing secretly." The gentleman said that he was necessary to his family. "We must dread the judgments of God," replied his Lordship; "He alone is necessary; yes, God alone is necessary to the world. You tremble, and I should like to die a martyr!"

The diocese of St. Agatha was close to that of Caserto, and several officers in the king's service had to reside in these towns; they also called forth Alphonso's watchfulness. A stranger, who was an officer, carried on an adulterous intercourse at St. Agatha, and his Lordship warned him of it several times. The officer was tired of these troublesome reprimands, and constantly repeated in vexation, "What does this withered old man want?" He even came to menaces, and went so far, that fears were entertained for his Lordship's life. Canon Testa and others informed him of this, and spoke to him of the violent character of the officer; but Alphonso was fortified with the heart of an apostle. "I have no cause to fear from him," he answered; "if he wishes to send a ball through my head, I am ready to die, but I am determined that he shall put an end to his excesses." As the scandal continued the same as ever, his Lordship informed the Chevalier Negroni of it, who caused the woman to be banished, and compelled the officer to submit to the shame of coming to promise amendment at the feet of the bishop.

A captain in the cavalry, one of the most distinguished gentlemen of St. Agatha, and the

commanding officer of the fortress of Caserto, kept a woman with him, who formed one of a company of actors who had come to St. Agatha. This was a great scandal for youth; Alphonso was therefore obliged to have vexatious contests with this officer also; as his paternal admonitions had no success with him, he informed the governors of the Infant Don Ferdinand of it; the result was that the woman was expelled: the unhappy creature soon ended her life in a stable, eaten up by worms. A short time afterwards, the captain died at Naples, with sentiments of repentance, for which he acknowledged himself to be indebted to the paternal and reiterated warnings of the man of God.

Alphonso had to bear similar annoyance on several occasions in regard to a certain company of soldiers, named *fucilieri*, who were in garrison at Montesarchio, and often came into the territory of Mojano, where they caused great disorders. There was one of them amongst others, called Francis Jourdain, who was constantly making attempts against the honour of the most respectable families. Having met with resistance on the part of a poor girl, he went so far as to strike her with a stiletto. Such crying offences kept Alphonso in constant alarm; he at length resolved to apply to the Prince de la Riccia, the Lord of Mojano, and he at the same time wrote a most energetic letter to the commandant Don Emmanuel Solajoles; his solicitations were so efficacious that none of these soldiers put foot in this country again.

A gentleman of the same company and of the territory of Mojano, where he went under pretence of visiting his family, took away from thence an unhappy female whom he had seduced. Her mother went in tears to solicit the protection of her bishop. Alphonso was moved with compassion, and immediately informed the commanding officer at Montesarchio of it. He received the letter whilst he was at dinner; he sent for the gentleman that very instant, he disarmed him, and made him undergo a long confinement. The young woman was then sent back to her mother, and the seducer wrote to his Lordship to say that he would not go near the house again; and it was so, for he never saw her again.

There were two custom-houses in the diocese, one at Ducento, and the other at Arpaja, which called for the services of a good many officers; but, thanks to his Lordship's zeal, they never premanently resided at them; as soon as any one of them deviated from the right path, he was immediately removed. There was an officer who had commerce with a woman of bad character at Ducento; the priest was unable to put a stop to it, and therefore informed Alphonso of it. His Lordship in turn, on seeing that the culprit persevered in evil, applied to the Marquis Anna, the superintendent of the custom-house: his representations were so effectual that the officer was deprived of his place and expelled from Ducento. He by the same means caused another custom-house officer to quit Arpaja and to be

turned out of his employment, whose misconduct affected the neighbouring villages. His Lordship on hearing that several of the soldiers gave themselves up to shameful excesses, immediately wrote a letter, the result of which was, that the regiment's quarters were changed, and that the commanding officer received the strictest orders to take care that none of the men came near Arpaja again. An inhabitant of this town, who had derived benefit from the troops being quartered there, went to complain of their going away, and to expose his distress to Alphonso; the saint was touched with compassion, and sent for one of the syndics of the parish, and begged him to give the petitioner something in compensation; it ought to have been willingly done, as the departure of the regiment left a great many young girls in peace, in whose fate they ought to have been interested. The syndic replied that he could not take it upon him; the others got out of it in the same way, and his Lordship ended by himself indemnifying the man who had had recourse to him.

The saintly bishop esteemed purity of conduct as the most precious treasure for his flock; he therefore took alarm whenever he heard that a company of soldiers had arrived in his diocese; when it was at St. Agatha, or at Arienzo, he immediately sent for their commander, in order to beg him to look after the tranquillity of the place and the honour of families. One of them got wearied with these repeated pieces of advice, and said to him, "My

Lord, my soldiers are not novices belonging to your congregation, nor that of the Capuchin fathers; they have liberty, and if they wish to use it, who can hinder it?" But what Alphonso could not obtain from the subaltern officers, he often succeeded in having enforced through the assistance of the local superiors, or through the tribunal of Montefusco. His zeal made him ingenious in reaching the guilty. "One may say," Archdeacon Rainone wrote me, "that until Mgr. Liguori's arrival at St. Agatha, crime stalked boldly not only in the towns and country, but also in every part of the diocese. As soon as this messenger from God was invested with the government of this church, sin was pursued into its most hidden corners; and if it came out now and then, it was only by stealth, and in fear." But we must also say that God aided the zeal of His servant, and assisted him in quite a special manner. "It was a marvellous thing," said the priest Don Thomas Aceto, "that what we were ignorant of, was always known to his Lordship. Many times iniquity was committed at night in the country or in a distant village, yet the day had scarcely dawned, ere we were warned of it at the bishop's house."

To give an example which happened at his palace at Arienzo. One night the coachman and the cook tried to perpetrate an abominable act, but at the instant when they were going to commit the crime, the culprits were suddenly seized with fear, and their accomplice, who was as terrified as they were, took flight, and hid

herself. This all took place in the silence of night, and no one could therefore know of it by any natural means; however, as soon as it was day, his Lordship sent for his two servants, he reproached them with their fault, and exhorted them to confession. This incident would have remained in oblivion, if the cook, on hearing of the miracles which Alphonso wrought after his death, had not himself come to Naples and revealed this prodigy to me, while the coachman made a similar confession to the priest of St. Agatha, Don Thomas Jadevaja.

CHAPTER LIX.

As Alphonso considered that vices of an infamous sort were the cause of the damnation of the greater part of mankind, he also was relentless in following after women of irregular lives, those perfidious rocks where so many victims perish. He spared no trouble in order to bring them into the right path; he made them come to him even from the extremities of his diocese; he gave them warnings, he set before them the enormity of their crime, and hell open under their feet, without forgetting to place before their eyes the sad consequences their disorders would cause them to suffer even on earth; then, in order to take away all excuses from them, he offered to relieve their misery. One day, the syndic of

Arienzo came to tell him that he had imprisoned a woman of bad character, "*Gloria Patri!*" exclaimed the bishop; then he added, "But there must now be some aid given to her." "As you please," replied the syndic. "Give her a carlin a day," said his Lordship. "A carlin is a great deal too much," answered the magistrate. "All these women deserve nothing better than prison. It will be quite sufficient if you give her two grains." "No, no," responded his Lordship, "let us give her four grains." "That is still too much; two grains are not to be had without difficulty, and that will be enough," said the syndic. At length they agreed on three grains and a half.

When any of us were on a mission in the diocese, he especially recommended us to look after women of ill fame. "The conversion of one of these women," he said to us, "is no small gain. Grant them whatever they wish, without minding about the money, provided they sincerely renounce their shameful mode of life." One could hardly have believed with what ardour he strove to free society from these stumbling-stones of scandal. "Mgr. Liguori," said the grand-vicar Rubini, "was constantly the hammer and the terror of prostitutes. What did he not do in order to extricate them from sin? In order to obtain this end, he did not only trust to the activity of the courts of justice and to the lords, but he stirred up even the ministry and supreme court." His ordinary means of converting them was imprisonment, but as there was not a prison

fit for women in the diocese, he got the lords to have one built in each place, or else to have the old ones repaired; and besides this, to have a separate dwelling for the gaoler and his wife next to the prison. "These prisons were always full of abandoned women," said Don Carmin Jacuzio, a clerk in the court of Arienzo. "Before releasing them his Lordship required to have their written promise to give up crime, in order that he might make use of it in case of need, if they fell back again." When the pain of imprisonment was not efficacious, Alphonso had recourse to that of exile. "My most esteemed Lord," he wrote to the Duke of Maddalon, on the 18th of December, 1763, "I stand in need of your Excellency's kind assistance in order to do away with a great scandal at Arienzo. There is a wicked girl there called Mary Sibrera, who was condemned to banishment last year, but through the promises she then made to me, I deferred her banishment. As I have just heard that she is worse than before, I beg your Excellency to write to the magistrate to have her imprisoned without any indulgence, and to renew the order for her expulsion; I hope that you will grant me this favour; for I know not what more I can do, and I am in great need of the support of your arm to justify myself before God."

In a letter of the 11th of October, 1767, to the Count of Cerreto, the tutor of the young Duke of Maddalon, Alphonso said, "Something has happened to me which distresses me greatly. Your Excellency knows that at Cologna, which

is a hamlet dependant on St. Agatha, there is a certain girl, who was very devout at first, and who is now a devil whose snares are laid throughout the village. She has been the cause of a very violent scuffle lately, in which an arquebuss was used. Your Excellency alone can remedy this state of things, by causing this girl to be banished twenty miles away from the diocese." Alphonso then presented to the count as he had before done to the duke himself, that these pestilential women could not be tolerated in small places, where one scandal of this sort is enough to corrupt the whole population. "It is true," are the words he used, "that they are tolerated in large towns, to avoid still greater evils, but in small localities they are positively not to be endured."

He also obtained through the commissioner Don Blaise San Severino, the imprisonment of three of these wretched beings belonging to Arienzo. The commissioner wrote to him on this subject in the following manner: "I have just given the order for the wished-for banishment. Please God, nothing worse may result. They will go into places where they will be free from your paternal admonitions and deprived of your alms, and will give themselves up to the worst disorders." "Let each one protect his own sheep," answered Alphonso, "and thus when they find that they are chastised wherever they go, and that they are without any place of refuge, and covered with infamy, they may open their eyes and renounce their sin."

One of these women began to become notorious at Sancta Maria de Vico; he immediately sent for her; as she had a most disagreeable exterior, the secretary as soon as he saw her, went to tell his Lordship, that as her face was more repulsive than famine, she was incapable of doing harm. "Well," responded his Lordship, "but in time of famine even hemlock is eaten." Alphonso therefore reproved her, and threatened her with severe chastisements; but as the poor woman made protestations of good conduct, and stated her misery, he dismissed her, and gave her a large alms besides.

When scandal arose in the case of married women, Alphonso felt a double pain. See what he wrote to the Prince de la Riccia on the 17th of February, 1770, touching two of these women who had demoralised the village of Forchia: "This is as a thorn piercing my heart, especially as I feel that I am unable to remedy it. I therefore have recourse to the powerful arm of your Excellency, and entreat you to write to the magistrate of the place with all possible energy, to direct him to make use of imprisonment and banishment against this awful scandal." He obtained all that he wished for from this pious prince.

When the prince set out for Spain, Alphonso had recourse to his agent; it often happened that he implored the aid of the king. When the prince returned from his journey, and before he had put foot in his palace, Alphonso wrote to him to Naples, on the 21st of June, 1773,

to inform him of a new scandal. It was no less a one than that of a two-fold adulterous intercourse. "I entreat you to write a few words to Don Charles Aceto," he said to him, "to cause him to summon this woman, and in your name endeavour to make her think seriously by means of promises and threats." As this reprimand produced no effect, Alphonso wrote to the prince a second, and then a third time, and at last, by the incarceration of the culprits, he had the consolation of obtaining their return to God.

As he could not act with all rigour in punishing married persons, on account of tolerant or conniving husbands, he had first to try to convert these latter, or to act with great prudence. It was under circumstances of this sort that he wrote thus to the priest of St. Nicholas at Sancta Maria de Vico: "I have been informed that three young men of your parish have improper intercourse with the wife of N—, who resides at Sancta Maria de Loretto. I have also heard that N— has similar relations with another married woman at Cimentara. I beg your Reverence to speak to them, and to give them a severe reprimand; try and send them here to me after having corrected them, but I fear they will not consent to come. Try at least to intimidate them, by telling them that if the bishop were informed of their conduct, he could give information of it to the king, and send for the police officers from Montefusco, as has been done in other cases; in short, let us do all we can. I bless you, and am....."

Even imprisonment and banishment were not always enough in his Lordship's eyes. He often would have wished the culprits to be punished as they deserved, in order thereby to strike a salutary terror, but he had sometimes the distress of seeing obstacles placed in the way of the execution of his plans. "One cannot have these bad women either flogged or even banished, if one has not proofs of their irregular life, and these proofs, to my great regret, are often wanting, on account of the human respect which stops those who could testify against them." His vigilance on this point was so great, that he knew even the very places where these infamous women laid their snares. At Arienzo, the priest Don Salvadore Framontana once went with him in a carriage to a church, where he was going to preach; when they reached a certain place called Ceajanello, Alphonso said with a sigh, "Ah! bless this spot with a special blessing, O Lord!" he then added, "This is a scene of debauchery, and I am now engaged in putting a stop to it; but, alas! when I root out evil on one side, it reappears on the other." Several times, as the grand-vicar Rubini has related to me, when his Lordship received tidings of the appearance of some intriguer, he did not sit down to table until he had put it out of her power to injure any one, and he gave a reason for this haste and eagerness by saying, "These sort of things do not admit of any delays; an offence against God is in question, and if there were but one single sin involved, we are bound to prevent its commission."

"When he once knew where the den was," said Canon Verzella, "he took no rest until he had the beast in his power." An unworthy father of the parish of St. Stephen, had let two of his daughters be prostituted; when his Lordship heard of it, he was filled with grief. Full of impatience, he immediately sent for the priest, Don Felix Nuzzo, and said to him with great agitation, "Poor unhappy creatures! what are they doing in Don Peter's farm?" "Don Peter has sent the father and the children away." "Then what has now become of them?" "Perhaps," replied the priest, "they are in the parish of St. Agnes." At these words Alphonso sent for the priest of this parish, Don Francis Ferrara; he told him that they were in the parish of St. Felix; his Lordship instantly gave notice of it to the priest, Don Simon Lucia; having at length discovered the house they lived in, he enjoined the priest to look after them, and not satisfied with that, he undertook to get one of these unfortunate creatures married, by giving her a portion of ten ducats; at a later period, he succeeded in settling a second; and also placed two more of the sisters in safety, to whom he assigned a pension.

On being informed that another woman of Arienzo lived in sin and far from her husband, he immediately sent his secretary to the governor's house, but he did not find him in, and the secretary did not take the trouble of going back to him again. After the lapse of a little time, his Lordship did not forget to inquire

as to the result of his visit. The secretary then wanted to excuse himself, and said that he had not been able to see the magistrate, and had not had time to go to his house again; his Lordship was exceedingly pained at this negligence: "Don Felix," he said to him, with deep sorrow, "when an offence against God is in question, we should leave everything in order to put a stop to it." He sent him back to the governor's with all speed; and he did not get tranquil again until he knew that the woman was in prison. Mgr. Rossi, the bishop of Ischia, who witnessed this noble zeal, exclaimed, full of admiration, "Mgr. Liguori is a saint, who is rendered incomparable by his zeal!" One day the grand-vicar Rubini came to Alphonso just as he was taking his repast in bed: "We have bad news," he said to him, "a most suspicious stranger has come to establish herself at Arienzo." "Only one," replied his Lordship, laughing, "we shall have more than one; these sort of adventurers never come singly." The secretary and the grand-vicar fancied that these tidings had not made a great impression on his Lordship; but they were mistaken. He had scarcely finished his meal before he dismissed every one, and sent for Brother Francis Anthony, to dictate to him a most energetic letter to the Count of Cerreto; he informed him of the scandal, and begged him to send to Arienzo immediately, that it might be forcibly removed. On that same evening four soldiers drove away the infamous woman.

He was above all inexorable towards those who, through being sadly learned in this trade, were also able to teach it to others. At Arienzo one of these latter had several women in her service, and received strangers at her dwelling, particularly soldiers; Alphonso had several times brought her before the courts of justice, but always in vain; on seeing how incorrigible she was, he once said to her, "Miserable wretch that you are, you will not give over your crimes, but God will know how to put an end to them. You will die in a state of damnation, and in a most tragic manner." The priest Don Francis Ferrara, and his vicar Don Agnello Sgambati, were present when this prediction was made, and which was not long in being verified; for the unhappy creature, in order to escape from a prison, fled from the town, and was obliged to wander about on the neighbouring mountains in the depth of winter; she was several times forced to sleep in the woods. Nevertheless, she came near to the town every night to abandon herself to her criminal courses; but as the companion of her debaucheries had been threatened with imprisonment by his Lordship, one evening when this woman was coming to meet him, he pretended to have nothing to do with her, and pursued her, casting stones at her. In her flight this miserable woman fell into a deep ditch, where she died. In order to give an example full of terror, his Lordship caused her body to be carried between three lighted torches to the trench

into which it was thrown, as an example to those of a similar description.

It is easy to imagine what expense all these measures must have entailed; Alphonso had to pay large sums to the inferior people whom he employed, and even to the higher officers. In speaking one day to Don Salvadore Tramontana, the priest, he said to him, "You cannot think how much money I have caused the constables to get through these abandoned women. I assure you I have wasted a deal of good money." Even the soldiers could not help publishing accounts of his zeal, although they were sometimes unfaithful to him. "It is incredible," said one of them to the same priest Tramontana, "how many sins Mgr. Liguori prevented being committed, and how many scandals he extirpated out of his diocese." After the example of Jesus Christ, who pardoned the penitent sinner, Alphonso received with kindness all those who wished to amend. The good shepherd who finds a lost sheep, does not experience as great joy as his Lordship did when he succeeded in saving any of these unhappy creatures. There was no sacrifice he was not ready to make to extricate them from sin and misery. Entire volumes would not suffice to recount all that he did in favour of those who amended their ways.

Archdeacon Rainone told me that he spent considerable sums of money, from the time he came to the diocese, in aiding a great number whose indigence had led them to crime. These gifts were not confined to the town of St. Agatha

alone, he spread them throughout all parts of his diocese without any distinction. Don Agnello Sgambati, who was curate of the parish of St. Anthony, affirmed to me, that Alphonso assisted a very great number in that place alone, and caused them to receive a stipend every month through his hands. All the other priests and curates have assured me of the same thing.

A prostitute who had been whipped on Alphonso's arrival at St. Agatha, and was afterwards banished from all the states of the Duke of Maddalon, resolved to re-enter them after an exile of eleven years; as soon as his Lordship heard of it he wrote the following letter to the priest, dated 3rd of December, 1774: "As this woman, Elizabeth, has come back here again, let her know from me that I will give her six carlins every month if she conducts herself properly; but I must first be convinced as to her persevering." On hearing that a poor widow had caused the ruin of her two daughters, he gave her a severe reprimand; as the culprit was converted, he assigned to her as well as to each of her children a daily allowance of money, besides many alms in furniture, clothes, &c., in order that by adding to these gifts the fruits of their own labours, they might have enough to live on honestly. On one of these women returning to the diocese after being converted, his Lordship let her know that, if she persevered, he would insure her an allowance of fifteen carlins a month. On one day hearing that another was also converted, he wept for joy, and ordered his secretary to

inform the girl that he was ready to give her anything, provided she remained constant in her conversion from sin.

A wicked girl, to her afflicted mother's great regret, had ruined both her body and soul by her debaucheries. When she was reduced to the last extremity, she applied to the house of the Incurables at Naples. Alphonso did not lose sight of her, and hastened to recommend her to the notice of several priests. Misfortunes seconded the workings of grace, so that the unhappy girl at length opened her eyes and wept over her past misconduct. This moved the Bishop of St. Agatha to tears; he sent for the mother, and engaged to provide for the wants of her daughter. "I have sent for the mother," he wrote to Salvadore Tramontana, the priest; "she appears to me to be a good woman, although she is very poor; for this reason I intend to send her to Naples to seek her daughter. I have promised to assist her and to give her a monthly allowance; but I hear that the girl is in the greatest destitution; she must then be clothed from head to foot. Will you have the charity to provide for this at my expense, but with as little outlay as possible? First, procure for her two new chemises, a handkerchief for the head, and another for the neck, a serge petticoat, an under-dress of canvass, a mantle, a pair of white stockings, and a pair of shoes; but I do not wish them all to be quite new, because that would cost too much. They may be met with at the old-clothes shops, where such things may

be found in good condition; if one took really old goods, the thing would have to be done over again next day. I should not take the liberty to burthen you with all these commissions, if I did not know your great charity. In any case you can consult with Brother Francis about it, and then inform me how much money I have to send you, because as soon as she is clothed, I shall make her mother take her back. I recommend this work of mercy to you, and am....." Who does not admire the true minister of the Lord throughout all these details? His liberality towards these female penitents was so unbounded, that those who had always led correct lives were envious of it. One evening during the scarcity, at the end of his visit to the Blessed Sacrament, he was preparing to leave the church. A woman suddenly came up to him, and said to him impudently, "My Lord, it is only bad women who are in your good graces; would to God you had never come here. If one leads a good life, there is no hope of anything from your Lordship." The indignant secretary wanted to scold this impertinent woman. The bishop stopped him, by saying to him, "Be quiet! Perhaps this woman has some want which I can satisfy." Then turning to her, he said, "I should like to assist everybody, but I must begin with those who are in sin; it is of urgent importance to free them from it."

Our saint's conduct in these sort of affairs was neither understood nor approved by everybody; even several priests let him know that

he was often deceived by his goodness. "It matters little if I am deceived," he used to answer, "provided I thwart the plans of the devil: it is no little gain if one can prevent an offence against God, were it but for a quarter of an hour; and besides, it often happens that several abstain from their disorders for good." Archdeacon Rainone also one day told him that he ought to withdraw the allowance from some whose perseverance was doubtful. "That is not certain," his Lordship answered; "but if I abandon them, they may perhaps be led to yield to despair; and besides, if they commit but one mortal sin less, is it not a great thing for God's glory?" Alphonso was however discreet in these sort of donations. They usually only consisted of five grains a day, in order that the alms might require to be increased by means of labour, and that it might not be an encouragement to idleness and dissoluteness. The conversion of these sinners was one of the chief ends Alphonso had in view in causing missions to be given in his diocese. He recommended them to the care of the missionaries, whom he furnished with all they could require. Don Theodosius Telesca, of Avigliano, the priest, told me that he was one day speaking to his Lordship of the good dispositions which two of these women manifested, when he replied to him, "I am ready to give my blood and my life for them: and if they act with sincerity, I will not fail to assist them, were I obliged to go without my food to do so."

Alphonso put the finishing stroke to his zeal, by causing a great number of these penitents to enter into the married state, and in order to establish them, he often did not hesitate to contribute from thirty to forty ducats for their portion; but he especially tried to do it in good time; as soon as he heard of any young person deviating from the right path, he immediately endeavoured to get her married. He attached the greatest importance to its being to her seducer.

One day while our Father Christian Carbone was on a mission in the diocese, he came to see him to settle about six marriages of this sort in the country of Arpaja alone. This caused Alphonso's heart to throb with joy, though he generally in such cases dispensed with all his fees, and willingly procured the necessary licences at his own expense. It even happened at times that as his own means were not enough for the charity of his heart, he had recouse to the charity of those in affluent circumstances and to houses of relief.

There was a man who agreed to marry one of these women, but on condition that his Lordship would give him something. This news gave great delight to Alphonso; he immediately opened his purse and gave him ten ducats. Such instances were not rare, and these marriages were generally happy ones. "It is true," said Alphonso, "that there are certain kinds of forced unions of which I cannot approve; but of two evils one must choose the least."

An officer of the Duke of Maddalon kept company with a poor girl at St. Agatha, whom he did not intend to marry; the scandal became a crying one; when his Lordship heard of it, he did all he could to persuade the soldier, but when he saw that he could not unite them, he informed the duke of the matter, who deprived the officer of his situation and expelled him from the town.

His Lordship heard that a gentleman of Arpaja had a similar connexion; he sent for him to give him a warning about it; the young man had not courage to leave the young person, so he resolved to marry her. This excited the dissatisfaction of his parents, and they applied to the king in order to have a stop put to the alliance. Alphonso however, who saw no other way of putting a stop to the scandal, told the young man that if he would not give up his project of marriage, he would take upon himself to procure its execution. The young man remained firm, and his Lordship succeeded in concluding the affair happily, through the aid of the king.

However, what caused Alphonso the greatest consolation was to be able to cause any of the penitents to shut herself up in a convent, and he spared neither trouble nor expense to arrive at this end. He succeeded in placing a good number in the convents at Naples and at Nola, notwithstanding the great difficulties he often had to surmount in so doing.

It was an inexpressible sorrow to him when

he could not succeed. One of these women was an object of solicitude to him, in the year 1773. On the 22nd of August he wrote as follows on the subject, to Canon Lignola: "I have heard that Mary N— of Arienzo, an orphan of twenty years of age, is at the hospital of the Incurables. Deprived as she thus was of the direction of her parents, this young person, whose exterior was very much in her favour, went to Naples, where she led an irregular life for some time. She would now be glad to enter some convent; but to my great sorrow, I have not yet been able to gratify her. For this reason, and in full confidence in your Reverence's goodness and charity, I entreat you as superior of the asylum of St. Raphael, for the love of God, to deign to receive her into this house." The canon, who remembered the refusal of which we spoke in chapter forty, in regard to a vassal of the Prince of la Riccia, agreed to the request on condition that his Lordship would furnish her wardrobe. In the year 1765, the missionary fathers, who were afterwards called by the name of Mary of Holy Purity at Naples, gave the mission in the diocese of Bojano; they met with a married woman in the territory of Ferrazzano who lived in a state of concubinage; this woman told these missionaries in confession, that she belonged to Frasso, which was Mgr. Liguori's diocese, and she added that the child she had with her was by her lawful husband. The missionaries lost no time in informing Alphonso of this. The saintly old man was filled with very great joy at the tidings. On seeing the sincere

repentance of this woman, and her wish to enter a convent, he succeeded in placing her in the refuge of St. Clare at Naples; he supplied her with what necessaries she required, and besides many other gifts, he assigned her an annual pension of thirty-six ducats; he also earnestly recommended her to the care of Don Gaetan de Marco, the priest who converted her, in order that he might act as her confessor, and he frequently reminded him of her. He had the little child brought up at St. Agatha, and when he got older, he maintained him at Naples at his own expense, in order that he might learn some trade. This penitent was a consolation to Alphonso, who went several times to see her when he was staying in Naples in 1767. After she had been thus supported for five years, her husband died, and she had an opportunity of making an honourable second marriage, and his Lordship did not fail to assist her to the end with his accustomed generosity.

Although he had it so much at heart to recover the wandering sheep, he took even still more pains in saving the lambs confided to his care from the jaws of wolves. All that could be said on this subject would be far below the reality. Hundreds of poor girls owed the preservation of their honour to his alms-deeds. Without entering into a detail of the assistance he rendered to them, we shall confine ourselves to saying that he went so far as even to procure innocent adornments for them to take away from them all temptation to envy or to sin.

CHAPTER LX.

As Jesus told His apostles to gather up the fragments after the miraculous multiplication in the desert, so I in like manner intend now to collect together a great many things which I omitted in the course of this Memoir. True zeal is characterised by its being universal and without reserve, and this also attended that of Mgr. Liguori. He always did all he could to remove any scandal from the midst of his people, and he especially tried to stifle the evil in its beginning.

A troop of actors came to St. Agatha, and he was the more alarmed at it as he saw that they intended to remain there. He therefore entreated for the aid of the Duke of Maddalon's arm against them, and he succeeded in getting an order for their withdrawal. The actors had recourse to the duke's agent, and even to the bishop himself, in order to obtain a delay, were it but for one day, in order to act a play which they said was very good indeed; but there was no reprieve for them, and they were obliged to set out at once.

When Alphonso arrived at St. Agatha, the principal gentlemen were occupied in preparing a play for the carnival, entitled, "La Contessa Sperciasépé;" but during the spiritual exercises which he himself gave them, and just as he

administered the holy communion to them, he said to them, "Do me the kindness to add to the promises you have made to Jesus Christ, that of not acting the play." His wishes were accomplished.

Not being able to prevent the representation of another play which the gentlemen of Airola had arranged about, he asked that he should at least be allowed to read it, and they were obliged to submit to act with the retrenchments he made in it; he also did not fail to manifest his great displeasure about it to Cervo the doctor, who formed one of the company: "You are men advanced in age," he said to him, "and this is the example you give to the young! I do not know how you will be able to think of it at the hour of death." He would have liked to annihilate even the very name carnival. What did he not do during these days to prevent masquerades and other diversions? We have already seen that he established sermons in the churches and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament at this season. He ascended the pulpit himself at such times to inveigh against sin; he sent for the chief gentlemen, and conjured them not to put masks on; he applied to the head magistrates, in order to get them to prevent all disorder; I may say more than this, he had recourse to the sheriffs and officers of the garrison, to get them to take pains to hinder all kinds of spectacles or assemblages of a dangerous sort.

The gentlemen of St. Agatha had introduced

the custom of alternately giving each other large entertainments during the carnival. When Alphonso knew of it, it alarmed him.

"Festivities and good cheer are never unaccompanied with sin," he said. On hearing that Don Dominic Cervo, who was a respectable man and one who feared God, had given one of these entertainments in his turn, he sent for him and reprimanded him. "You ought to be more interested in this matter than me," he said to him, "you have daughters of a marriageable age. Fire and straw do not do well together, especially when the devil blows on them." He was not, however, able to abolish this custom, for the governor and the military officers were also of the number, but he succeeded in at least preventing there being any ball or indecent dancing, but only some minuet of the most correct description.

In the month of July, in 1773, some mountebanks arrived at Arienzo, accompanied by two young female rope-dancers, who were dressed up as men. As soon as Alphonso was informed of it, he applied both to the governor and to the agent of the Duke of Maddalon, Don Francis Andrew Mustillo, in order that they might be sent away. The players said on quitting the town, that they were going to stay at Naples; but his Lordship soon heard that they had stopped at Airola. "I thought that they had left my diocese," he immediately wrote to the Prince de la Riccia; "but yesterday I had the sorrow of hearing that they are at Airola, and that they

mean to perform in your Excellency's palace. I must entreat you to send your orders to Airola, and prevent its being thought that you consent to this. People say that dancers do not give scandal; but it is certain that they cannot edify, and I am persuaded that the devil would not fail to take advantage of it." Nothing more was necessary to cause these people to be banished from the diocese.

Alphonso dreaded disorders even in large assemblages which had religion as their pretext; he recurred to rigorous measures to put a stop to them in case of need; thus he was in the habit of suspending the confessors for reserved cases on fêtes where there was too great a concourse of people. "This is the way," he said, "to prevent people from coming to unburthen their consciences without any fruit, and thus from loading them with new sins through the contempt they show for the sacraments."

He had no less horror of nocturnal assemblages. At Arienzo, on Christmas night, the people were in the habit of going out of the town, with the inhabitants of the adjoining villages, to assist at the offices in the church of the Capuchin fathers. There was no devotion in this; on the contrary, this concourse of people of both sexes gave opportunity for all sorts of disorders. In order to put a stop to these evils, Alphonso wished to be present in person, but the doctors opposed this, on account of the obvious danger there was that it might

kill him. For the same reason he forbade the church to be opened before six o'clock in the morning, and he afterwards issued the same prohibition in regard to all the other churches.

The procession which takes places on St. Mark's day, repaired to a church which was dedicated to this saint, and which was situated on a little hill about three miles from Arienzo; but as this ceremony entailed serious inconveniences through the difficulty of ascending the mountain, Alphonso tried to remedy it, and thought of another church as the one for the station; but as he did not know whether he could do this of his own accord, or if the Pope alone had the right, he consulted Father Villani. After he had stated the case to him, and the plan he had thought of, he said to him, "Please to consult Tommasini or some other author, to see if it is allowable for a bishop to make such a change. I have read Gavanti and Merati, and I see nothing in them to the contrary. If, however, there is any obstacle to it, write and let me know of it." From this time the procession took place at the church of St. Agnes, which is another church in the district of Arienzo. In a word, Alphonso would have liked to destroy even the places which could be an occasion of evil: one day when passing near a forest belonging to the Duke of Maddalon in company with Canon Testa, he said to him, "That wood is not well situated; it may favour crime; but I know what I will do, I will write to the duke to have it cut

down." "Gently," replied the canon, "that cannot be done, for this wood is a considerable one, and of great advantage to the duke." Alphonso was disconcerted and remained silent, but he did so with a sigh.

On hearing that, notwithstanding his prohibitions, the priests and curates gave the catechism to the children of both sexes in their houses, he immediately wrote to the priests on the 13th of March, 1763, in these terms: "I have just heard, and with great grief, that in several parishes the children receive instructions in the houses of the priests, and not in the churches. Your Reverences will easily comprehend all the evils which may result from it, without my entering into details: I have been pained by your negligence in not informing me of it. I positively will not allow women to go to the house of any ecclesiastic whatsoever to be instructed; let it therefore be generally known that this detestable abuse must be given up at once. In future I beg that you will not again omit to inform me of any irregularities which you may see arise, and that you will be more attentive as to the right administration of your livings."

Our saint, in his office of bishop, also looked on himself as the peacemaker of his people, so he took all possible pains in reconciling spirits at variance with each other, and in strengthening the bonds of charity among his people. Great rancour had existed for several years at Airola, between Don Francis de Marco, the

agent of the Prince de la Riccia, and Don Joseph Ferace, the priest of Mojano. Several decrees had already been issued regarding them, and yet they again attacked each other before the courts of justice at St. Agatha and at Benevento. Whatever satisfaction was granted to Don Marco, he still always protested that he would not cease to follow after Don Ferace until he had ruined him. As Alphonso did not know what more he could do in order to reconcile them, he at length resolved to write to the Prince de la Riccia before leaving the diocese. "When a person is reduced to despair," he said to him in a letter of the 11th of June, 1774, "he is capable of giving way to all sorts of excesses, and I fear that if the matter is not ended, the results will be disastrous for the two families who are engaged in these interminable law-suits. I have written a long letter to Don Francis, but my words will be of little avail if your Excellency does not second me. I therefore entreat you to let Don Francis know that you really wish him to give up pursuing Don Ferace, and that he should abandon the impious project of ruining him, for otherwise the thing will end in a tragic manner. I hope that your Excellency's piety will succeed in putting a stop to these dissensions." His Lordship had the consolation of seeing these families reconciled.

A young man of Calzolajo was killed by a bayonet wound which he received from a soldier; the soldier was put in prison. While he

was imprisoned at Arienzo, two officers came from Naples to ask for his pardon. His Lordship therefore sent for the mother and the brother of the victim; they replied that they consented to pardon him, but that they gave him up to justice; at this word justice, the holy bishop exclaimed, "This is a mortal sin, this is not the way to forgive." He managed so well that he obtained the pardon for the soldier.

Nothing could equal the sorrow of the pious bishop when he saw any quarrel arise between ecclesiastics. The Dominican fathers disagreed about the funerals with the priests of Arienzo and of St. Maria de Vico. The quarrel had been a very serious one, but it seemed to be put an end to, and to yield to the mediation of the bishop, and he believed that a perfect reconciliation had been effected, when suddenly the priests of Arienzo made fresh claims. As soon as Alphonso heard of it, he wrote to the priest Don Matthew Nugliore, saying, "I should be much displeased at having to be occupied again about this dispute, in which the whole gain is to the devil." At length the Archbishop of Arienzo was the only one who would not yield, so Alphonso wrote to him in such severe terms that the matter was immediately and finally settled.

We have just spoken of the pains which our Saint took to put a stop to discord and to prevent its spreading in families, and among the clergy; it will not be out of place here to mention the course he adopted on two occasions when

no less a matter was in question than a combat unto death; we shall also add an interesting document which he sent to the king in opposition to the fatal prejudice in favour of duelling. One day during one of his pastoral visitations at Airola he heard that a young man had been mortally wounded in a combat; he immediately hastened to see the unhappy man; he manifested all the feeling of a tender father towards him, and assured him that he would assist both himself and his family; he thus appeased his resentment, and succeeded in obtaining the pardon of the murderer. After the death of the victim he assigned a pension to his old mother. Another day he was told that two young gentlemen had challenged each other to fight a duel; he instantly sent for them; he represented to them the consequences of their guilty project, and did not dismiss them until he felt sure that his remonstrance had been effectual.

The barbarous custom of duelling caused Alphonso great grief; he could not think of it without exclaiming in grief, "Poor souls! poor souls! who go straight to hell!" The following is a memorial which he addressed to the king to try and get him to be severe in punishing this ferocious practice. We have taken this incident, as well as the two preceding ones, from the Life of St. Alphonso, written in Italian by Father Don P. L. Rispoli, (pages 190, 191, 252, 253.

"Sire,

"Alphonso Liguori, Bishop of St. Agatha, through the sole desire of putting a stop to an outrage against God and to the loss of a great number of souls, most humbly lays the following representations before your Majesty, beseeching you to take them into consideration, and then to adopt those measures which shall be most fitted to put a stop to the great abuse of duelling, which has been a cause of grief to the capital and to the kingdom for some years.

"Your Majesty is not unaware that duelling is most punishable, on account of its fatal consequences; such for instance, as the hatreds it leads to in families, and its evils in regard to society. One can only attribute to the devil this invention of settling differences by the death of the combatants, like the heathens did, in whom the spirit of revenge had entire sway; therefore duels have been condemned by all laws both divine and human: from the year 855, the Council of Valence has pronounced the pain of excommunication against all duellists, and the privation of religious interment against the combatant who falls. This law was afterwards confirmed by the succeeding Pontiffs, and by the Council of Trent, (sess. 25, de. reform. cap. 29.) where it is said, 'Detestabilis duellorum usus, fabricante diabolo, introductus, ut cruenta corporum morte animarum etiam perniciem lucretur, ex christiano orbe penitus

exterminetur.' In the year 1593, Pope Clement VIII. in his bull 'Illius vices,' declared that the condemnation of duelling also included private duels without witnesses, as well as the officers and superiors who permit them. Sovereigns have also condemned duelling, as is proved by 'Unic cod de gladiat,' and in the laws of Spain, tit. 8, lib. 10. But your Majesty's glorious ancestors, the kings of France, have especially been most severe against these single combats. Louis XIII. prohibited them on pain of loss of dignity, nobility, and possessions, and declared that all duellers should remain branded with infamy. After this Louis XIV. pronounced sentence of death against them, and he caused this law to be executed with so much rigour that he had the glory of extirpating duelling from France.

"In the kingdom of Naples duelling was first forbidden by the emperor Frederick, as we see in his constitutions. After him, several kings of Naples have sanctioned divers most rigorous laws against this abuse. In the 2nd of January, 1540, (vol. I. page 250, in the Pragmat 1.) duelling was forbidden, under pain of death to the aggressor, even when the combat did not take place, and to the one challenged if he kills the challenger. The same penalty was also inflicted on the witnesses and seconds; and it was stated at the same time, that if the person challenged refuses the challenge, he shall thereby reap glory and not dishonour. In 1662, and on the 9th of May, (Pragmat 3. page 261,) it was declared that duellists shall be punished by ten years'

transportation, together with the pain of infamy, and of exclusion from all employments and dignities for the first offence; and that for the second, the culprits shall be punished by death.

"This destable custom of duelling ceased in this kingdom for a long while, but it has for some years been very frequent, particularly among soldiers, and it often results in the death of one of the combatants. It is a false opinion, but one which has many partisans in Germany, that officers challenged to a duel can lawfully accept it, in order not to lose their honour and their rank. This pernicious opinion was justly condemned in 1772, by Pope Benedict XIV. in his bull 'Detestabilem.' A Christian soldier ought not then to blush at refusing to disobey his God and his king.

"Sire,—your Majesty will greatly enhance your glory if you extirpate this accursed plague-spot from the kingdom, which causes loss of life to both soul and body. The undersigned therefore humbly entreats your Majesty to renew the laws published by your predecessors against duellists, and then to cause them to be strictly observed, by enforcing the penalties against them all, but especially against the military, amongst whom duels are most frequent; and also to declare that those who do not accept a challenge will preserve their office and their honour, but that on the contrary, duellists shall always remain branded with infamy as transgressors of the law. This declaration will be especially useful to your Majesty at present,

as you have set on foot the new royal brigade, composed of so many valiant young men, who are in the flower of their age, and whose effervescing passions might easily lead to challenge each other through the disputes to which they will often be hereafter exposed. Your Majesty's soldiers ought not to lose their blood and their lives for a false point of honour, but only for the defence of their faith, and for the preservation of their prince and of his states."

Alphonso's zeal was not unfruitful; his petition obtained the promulgation of a very severe law against duelling.

CHAPTER LXI.

One of the motives which led Alphonso to redouble his ardour for the glory of God and the salvation of his flock, was the awful account he felt he must one day render to God; the thought of the responsibility of a bishop made him tremble.

He was dining one day with Mgr. Albertini, who asked him how many souls he had in the diocese of St. Agatha. "There are forty thousand," Alphonso replied. "There are as many in mine," said Mgr. Albertini; upon which Alphonso bent his head several times, and added, "My Lord, we have each of us a weight of forty thousand hundred-weight on our shoulders; woe

to us if one of these souls be lost through our negligence!"

There perhaps never was a bishop who waged a more determined warfare on sin. Among the vices which he combated the most vigorously was that of blasphemy. As the law which caused those who were guilty of it to be punished at the public square with a bit in their mouths had been abolished, he enjoined the magistrates to punish them by at least imprisoning them. He denounced this execrable sin from the pulpit, and wished the priests often to set forth its enormity. He said, that with the exception of the torments of hell, the blasphemer differs in no way from the damned soul; but that he also carries the seal of his reprobation written on his forehead.

A public crier, nicknamed *Brother Wellcome*, from his having been once a novice with the Capuchins, had become a horrible blasphemer. As his Lordship was unable to get this man to come to him as he wished, in order that he might warn him and correct him paternally, he commissioned his servant Alexis to bring him to him, on the pretext of inquiring about the price of corn; but when he saw him Alphonso said to him, "It is not the price of corn, but you that I am anxious about; I hear that there is not a saint whom you do not blaspheme;" he then threatened to have him arrested and condemned to the galleys. The crier was so terrified that he left off his guilty habit for good and all. Whenever he met Alexis the servant afterwards,

he remembered his Lordship's happy stratagem, and used to ask him laughingly if he were not come to inquire about the price of corn; he died shortly afterwards in sentiments of penitence and resignation.

In the hamlet of Forchia there was a furious blasphemer, who was not satisfied with insulting the saints, but who went the length of reviling God Himself, and of blaspheming against Heaven. Alphonso could not do any good in the matter alone, so he applied to the Prince de la Riccia on the 26th of December, 1773: "I dare not put down on paper," said he, "the blasphemies which this man utters against the Blessed Virgin, they are so horrible and execrable; your Excellency must know that this abominable man has already been imprisoned for his blasphemies, but he has begun them again, and is worse now than before. Three years after this confinement, a monition was again issued against him by the ecclesiastical court. After having made the requisite inquiries, your Excellency must not only order his imprisonment, but cause sentence to be pronounced against him as an incorrigible." This wretched man was sentenced to spend many a dreary day in prison, and his purse suffered as well as his person through the fines he was obliged to pay to justice.

However, the sweetness which Alphonso knew how to use at the right moment, was as efficacious as the fear of chastisement. We will cite an instance of it. There was a blasphemer

at Forchia, who had been excommunicated for several years, and who persisted in his impenitence. Alphonso was not able to put up with him any longer, so he applied to the prince to have his trial got ready; however, he once more tried to win him by paternal counsels, and sent for him to the palace; but on finding that he did not venture to appear before him, he inquired as to the time when he would pass through the street; he then went to the window and called him by his name; then putting his hand on his head, he reproved him kindly, and represented to him the impiety of his words. He was overcome by this excessive goodness, and touched by impressions of grace, so that he began to think seriously, and humbling himself, was converted. His Lordship sent him to confession to Father Majone the next morning, and he wished him, in order to repair the scandal he had given, to remain, before being admitted to holy communion, at the church door for three Sundays, with a heavy cross on his shoulders and a large stone hung round his neck. The blasphemer submitted to everything, and his return to God was so sincere that he lived as a true Christian from that time, he approached the sacraments every eight days, and became a member of the Society of the Rosary.

Nothing could exceed Alphonso's love of justice, and he was anxious that it should be respected in all contracts. It was one of the points he recommended most strongly to preachers, and especially to priests. The scarcity in

1764 did not cause him as much pain as the open or tacit monopoly which he saw practised by the corn-dealers. He even applied to the Abbé Genovese, who had a high reputation at Naples, to ask his advice about it. When Father Terzi the Dominican gave the spiritual exercises at St. Agatha, Alphonso, who was then ill at Arienzo, wrote to him on the 30th of March, 1773, in the following terms: "As your Reverence is now engaged in giving the spiritual exercises, I hope you will speak of the injustice of two kinds of contracts which are said to be made use of at St. Agatha; the first is that of lending a labourer two oxen of the value of sixty or seventy ducats, upon the condition of the latter giving their owner ten measures of corn every year, which is certainly unjust. There is also another fraudulent condition, which is, that if the oxen die, the farmer must pay half their value, which is evidently contrary to equity, as this loss ought only to fall on the proprietor.

"The other contract is that of giving a sow to be fed, with the condition that her young shall be sold, and their price divided, but that if the animal dies, the farmer must pay half her value. I beg your Reverence to preach against such extortions several times over, for once will not be enough. Your Reverence knows the sentiments of moralists on this subject, and that a preacher is bound in conscience to preach against agreements which are public and which are manifestly unjust. I therefore rely

on your Reverence's assistance in regard to the suppression of this abuse, so that those concerned in it may at least know that they commit a mortal sin in imposing such contracts as those I have just cited, in which the disparity of the conditions is manifest." Not content with these recommendations, Alphonso, notwithstanding all his sufferings, himself inveighed against such great injustice from the pulpit at Arienzo.

We have already spoken of the severity with which our saintly bishop forbade those who were betrothed from dwelling under the same roof; on being informed by a priest of an infringement of this kind, he directed him to inform the future husband, that if he did not immediately quit the house of his intended bride, he would undergo the penalty of excommunication. The same kind of threat was also made to the future bride, in the event of her having consented to any illicit intercourse; and the priest was ordered to inform the bishop of any want of prompt obedience. This prompt severity had a salutary effect, and the scandal ceased.

That which gave Alphonso the greatest alarm was, when any engagements of marriage took place between young people whose parents refused to consent to it. When this occurred, he sent for the parents, in order to ascertain if the grounds of their opposition were reasonable; he united with the priests in doing all that was possible either to break off engagements entered into rashly, or to overcome the opposition of parents, to whom he showed that delay on their part must inevitably lead to sin.

It often happened that young people who wished to settle and were unjustly prevented from so doing by their parents, had recourse to the saintly bishop to tell him of the danger to which they were exposed. Alphonso immediately sent for their parents, and set before them the serious responsibility which they were under; and if they had no reasonable motive to give for their opposition, he managed so well that he obtained their consent. When young people had given public scandal by illicit intercourse beforehand, their marriage was preceded by a public penance; the woman was obliged to stand at the church porch with a candle in her hand on some day of solemnity; and the man was also obliged to be there wearing a crown of thorns on his head. This satisfaction was enjoined by an express order, and its accomplishment was rigorously exacted.

On seeing that the catechism was not explained to the children as he had prescribed, he addressed the episcopal vicar, who was residing at Airola, in a letter dated 17th of November, 1772, which was couched in the following terms: "It has come to my knowledge that parents, tutors, and sponsors, neglect to send their children or their pupils to the catechism. I request your Reverence to mention in a public conference on cases of morality, to all the confessors and the priests of the town, as well as to those of the hamlet of Bucciano, that before they hear the confessions of fathers and mothers, of tutors and other responsible persons, they must ask if they have

taken care to send the children to the catechism; and if they in despite of this warning fall back into the same negligence again, absolution must be refused to them."

His Lordship then spoke of other persons, and goes on to say, "The confessors must interrogate adults on the things which are necessary for salvation, and they must regulate their conduct in regard to the absolution on what I have written on other occasions; they must be careful in getting them to assist at the instructions which accompany high mass on Sundays and festivals. Confessors ought not to forget that they cannot grant absolution to those who are ignorant of these things until they become instructed in them."

Children who were under guardians also excited his charitable interest. If he saw that they were in the hands of those who were ill adapted to attend to their temporal and spiritual good, he did all he could in order to assist them himself. We may instance amongst many others, the children of the late James Tofano, a gentleman of Airola. He died leaving two children, a boy and a girl, under the guardianship of their mother, Laura de Cervo. As this lady made a second marriage, and his Lordship saw that the guardian whom they wished to appoint for her children was not fit for the office, he wrote to the Prince de la Riccia on the 6th of April, 1769, saying, "I feel that I ought to tell you my opinion as to the care of these children. It will be much better for them to be under the guardianship

of their maternal uncle, Don Dominic Cervo, I think, than under the care of any one else. I should like to see their property properly administered, and I know Don Dominic's skill and integrity in such matters. I have thought it a duty to give your Excellency this information, for the welfare of these children who are your vassals, and whose souls are entrusted to my care." The prince did as he wished.

No one was excluded from his Lordship's solicitude; if he could be of use out of his diocese, he never failed to seize the opportunity. When the Duke of Maddalon passed into a better life, his Lordship took the greatest interest in the religious education of his youthful son, and composed a little treatise for his express use, in which he laid the obligations of childhood before him. Don Philip Carafa, the Count Cerreto, who was the guardian and uncle of the young duke, manifested the most lively gratitude at this present, which was indeed a treasure, but we have to regret its loss as well as that of so many others.

His severity in punishing those who did not fulfil the paschal precept, was not stopped by any earthly considerations, and even the first gentlemen had to submit to see their names affixed to the church door, and if the Church's power were not strong enough to compel them to do their duty, he implored the intervention of the temporal lords. Thus he wrote to the Prince de la Riccia, on the 25th of April, 1770, to say, "For some years N—— has not fulfilled the

paschal precept, on a false pretence of insanity, and worse than this, he has prevented his sister from frequenting the sacraments. I know that your Excellency is full of zeal for the salvation of your vassals, and therefore I am sure that you will give orders to have this scandal remedied." And in order to lessen the difficulties in the way of the punishment of the culprit, he offered to keep him in prison at his own expense. His request was granted; the pretended maniac was put in prison, and his sister was thus enabled to fulfil her duties with all freedom.

If he required the precepts of the holy canons to be obeyed as regarded approaching the sacraments, he also caused them to be fulfilled in the excommunications which he pronounced on certain occasions. Thus he ordered the priests to refuse the sacraments to those who gave public scandal, however noble they might be, and he was not afraid to reject from the altar any one who presented himself there in contempt of the laws of the Church. All his charitable efforts to cause a gentleman who was a notorious adulterer to think seriously, failed utterly, and yet he presented himself to receive holy communion on Holy Thursday; Alphonso, who was administering the holy communion to the people, stopped short before him, and said to him in a severe manner, "What! do you not blush to approach the altar? We do not give pearls to swine here. Unhappy man! change your mode of life." At these words he passed on and left him full of confusion.

As his Lordship deprived all ordinary confessors of the faculty of absolving reserved cases in paschal time, the priest of Sta. Maria de Vico asked for the exercise of this power for all the confessors of his parish. The bishop answered him on the 8th of September, 1770, as follows: "My dear Don Matthew, I should not object to comply with your wishes at any other time; but at the approach of Easter there is no better method of causing great sinners to think seriously, as they are then obliged to confess if they would avoid excommunication. I regret having granted this faculty to several of the confessors at Arienzo; it is enough for your Reverence and your curate to enjoy them. As to the others, they can write to me when they require them; and thus the people who have given rise to such a request will see that absolution is not given to them lightly, and they will be led to reflect more seriously on the gravity of their faults. It is true, that the contrary custom which has been established in the diocese is brought against me as an objection; but such toleration seems to me to be a blameable abuse, which I wish to be destroyed for the sake of religion."

The priests of the diocese of St. Agatha stood in need of indefatigable zeal and apostolical courage; they were obliged to refuse the sacraments to those who gave scandal, even though they were powerful, and to reprimand them to their faces, and summon them to fulfil their duties. These startling actions had to be tolerably frequently repeated, and there was no room for

hesitation regarding them. While Alphonso was at Arienzo during the latter years of his stay there, he had cause to complain of two priests. On one occasion he sent for them and said to them energetically, "You are the guardians of the diocese and my coadjutors; how is it that I know of things of which you are ignorant? Your business is to be watchful and to warn me; mine is to take the necessary steps." A priest who was present at the interview, said to him, "But the things are done during the night, and how can the poor priest know anything about them." "The good shepherd never slumbers," replied his Lordship, "he goes about unceasingly seeking for his sheep." When the priests did not execute his orders and were not vigorous in repressing scandals, he lost his rest. A criminal connexion was discovered in a parish, and there was a want of energy in the measures taken to do away with it; he wrote the following letter on the 8th of September, 1770, to the priest and to his vicar: "I had firmly believed that I should have had nothing to do with this vexatious affair, but I find, to my great regret, that you have been guilty of negligence in the matter. I wish you at any rate to address your protest on the subject to the governor this very evening, as we agreed on, or at least, that you do something to prevent a continuance of the evil. I entreat you to write to me and tell me what you have done, for I am not at ease about it. When a disorder of this kind exists, if I did not hasten to put an end to it when it was in

my power to do so, I should believe that I was as guilty as if I had myself committed the sin."

Don Felix dell' Acqua, the governor of Arienzo, came to visit his Lordship one day, when Alphonso spoke to him of the scandal which a gentleman gave; he was the one to whom he had refused the communion. The governor asked him for a statement against him signed by the priest, adding that he thought he could then arrest this gentleman and send him to the court of justice in the country. Alphonso rejoiced at the firmness of the magistrate; he drew up the statement, and sent it to the priest for his attestation; but he was alarmed, and exclaimed, "I cannot do it, this gentleman is too powerful; who knows what might happen to me if I did?" This refusal distressed Alphonso so much that the tears came to his eyes: "What!" he exclaimed, "you are a shepherd; you see the wolf which has entered your flock, and you draw back!" He made such vigorous entreaties that the priest did not know what more to say, and asked for a fortnight to think it over, and he added that he would speak to the gentleman himself. In fact, the gentleman was seized with terror, for he was warned during the interval by the priest, and he dreaded the probable consequences of the bishop's measures; he therefore hastened to return to the path of duty and to give all the satisfaction which was required of him.

The priest of Sancta Maria de Vico once stated to him that he could not put an end to the

scandal given by a person whose protectors were powerful; when Alphonso replied, "When bad example is in question, the priest ought always to reprove and correct, even when he foresees the inutility of the correction, otherwise others will get hardened in their disorders, and the good will end by being scandalised. It is therefore not enough to speak in an indirect manner from the pulpit. This is not a new idea on my part; I expressed the same a long time ago in my book on *Morals*, and it is a point on which I have consulted many learned men."

The episcopal vicar of Arienzo would not consent to have his jurisdiction divided, although his Lordship thought it too extensive for one person, and objected that his reputation was concerned in the matter. "What does your fancied reputation signify to me," replied Alphonso, "it is the honour of Jesus Christ which I care about." The charge was divided, and the vicar was obliged to be contented with the half.

On being informed of the bad government of another vicar who was a gentleman of rank, and who abused his power in order to domineer over the clergy and to get well entertained himself, Alphonso tried to save his reputation by hinting at his giving up his post of himself. This language was not agreeable to the vicar. Alphonso was very patient with him for some time; but when he saw his obstinacy, he said to him plainly, "Either resign yourself, or I will dismiss you." And the vicar was obliged to give up his office.

Such are some among the striking instances of our saint's admirable zeal, that zeal which caused him to be so justly admired by Mgr. Ponteuza, the Bishop of Ariano. When he heard of Alphonso's death, he exclaimed, "Mgr. Liguori's life will be a censure on a great many bishops!"

CHAPTER LXII.

Alphonso received the cup of reproaches on entering the diocese, and he had to drain it to the dregs. In spite of the admiration which his zeal generally excited, those who were its object were usually offended at it, and resented its effects with bitterness; so true is it that however great one's love for justice may be, one does not like to see it exercised against oneself. The incumbent of whom we have before spoken,* after having been imprisoned for several years, without any amendment, was at length released from the prisons of Merano through the favour of the Prince of la Riccia and with his Lordship's consent. The prince ordered him to go and humble himself before Alphonso, and ask his forgiveness for the excesses of which he had been guilty. The wretched man went, but when he arrived in the bishop's presence, he

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* Chap. x. of this book.

was so far from humbling himself, that he bitterly reproached him for the persecutions he had made him suffer. "You must indemnify me for all that you have made me suffer," he said to him; "I do not forgive you for it." Alphonso took up his book on the *Way of Salvation* and presented it to him, saying, "Read this, and you will be satisfied." But the priest went on in the same tone. "I have been in danger of losing my life through you," continued he; "you would have lost a bad subject, I confess, and I should have lost a saintly superior, but a cripple." Alphonso made no reply, but looked at him with compassion and grief at so deplorable a state of mind; he then dismissed him and said to him, "May Jesus Christ have mercy on you, but Divine Justice is threatening you." And it was so; the clerk returned to his evil ways, and soon afterwards he was shot at, and thus he perished.

A wicked monk also caused him to suffer for his expulsion. His brother was also a priest, and was employed at the Annunziata at Naples; when he heard of his brother's disgrace, he hurried to Arienzo in a fury, and presented himself before his Lordship, making use of an expression which I shrink from repeating. Alphonso stated his conduct as regarded his brother in the most humble terms to him, and told him that his brother had compelled him to adopt the measures against him of which he complained. But the priest would not lis-

ten to anything, and got into such a passion that he nearly laid hands on his Lordship. One of the servants saw what an unpleasant position the saintly old man was placed in, and ran to call the grand-vicar, but before he came, Don John Manco, a priest and a gentleman of Airola, came, and when he saw that the insolent priest would not stop, and that his Lordship bore all his bad treatment like a lamb, "Sir," he said to him, "if Alphonso Liguori chooses to receive this abuse, so be it; but he is Bishop of St. Agatha, and I am bound to defend him: I am therefore about to throw you out of the window." This caused Alphonso to be in great perplexity, and he had the greatest difficulty in the world to prevent a misfortune.

There was a gentleman of Airola who went on obstinately in sin, and who was sent for to the palace; his Lordship reprimanded him, and on seeing his indifference he got more animated and reproved him more warmly. The gentleman was much nettled, and began to abuse him excessively; this did not move his Lordship, who merely said to him more than once while walking up and down, "Sir! you wish me to act as a bishop, and I will make you see that I am one."

He not only bore all kinds of affronts with the greatest patience to the end, but also loaded those who offended him with benefits. "When charity is patient," said he, "it is also kind. If we are really anxious to win over those who

do us harm to Jesus Christ, we must do them good."

A priest who held an office in the diocese, fancied himself offended through his brother, and had the impudence to go to his Lordship and heap insults upon him. "Do you not see," said he, "that you are unfit to fulfil you duties? How much better it would have been if you had remained at Ciorani to weep over your sins, than to come to St. Agatha to fill the office of bishop!" Alphonso replied with a smile. The grand-vicar asked that this priest should be deprived of his post; but his Lordship kept him in it, and he afterwards was made a canon.

Alphonso laboured to put an end to the scandalous connexions of a gentleman; the latter came to the palace full of rage and asked to see the bishop. The servants on seeing a man in a great passion, prevented his being admitted. As he could not insult his bishop to his face, he got into a fury, and uttered a volley of abuse against him. This dreadful scene became talked of, and reached the ears of the governor, who hastened to put the guilty offender in prison. When his Lordship heard of it he was greatly distressed, and sent for the governor; he excused the gentleman whose pardon he implored, and he did not rest until he had got him set at liberty that very day.

A young man, the son of a public crier, who was nicknamed "the fighter," on account of his turbulent habits, lived in sin. His Lordship did all he could to bring about his marriage, and

even offered to give a certain sum as a portion for his partner; but all this did not persuade the young libertine. "If you will not have her as your wife," his Lordship said to him, "I consent to that, but you must leave off your sin, or else I will give you over to the governor." This made the young man fear that he would be put in prison, and he went to the palace in a fury. The servants did not see him, so he entered without difficulty, and went through the rooms uttering passionate invectives and menaces against his Lordship. This caused everybody to come to see what was the matter, and the impertinent youth was turned out. When Alphonso heard of this he was much displeased, and the more so as the governor wished to imprison the culprit. He immediately sent to prevent the arrest, and as he feared that the grand-vicar would oppose this, he sent the message by another priest. Meanwhile Don Alphonso Puoti, the governor, came to the palace, and endeavoured to persuade his Lordship to consent to the imprisonment; his Lordship was so far from granting it, that he made the magistrate promise to let the youth alone. After that he managed so well that, thanks to his liberality, he succeeded in bringing about the projected marriage. One day when Alphonso was driving out, he met a villager of bad character, and who was full of anger for the corrections he had received from him; he loaded him with abuse and bad language. Alphonso bore it all in silence. On his return to the palace the grand-vicar wanted this impudent man to

be punished as an example. His Lordship was indignant at the idea, and positively forbade anything of the kind to be attempted. However, the grand-vicar informed the governor of it, and the daring offender was imprisoned that same evening. Alphonso heard of it the next day; he made loud complaints about it, and demanded that the villager should be instantly set at liberty; but in the evening he heard that the governor had not done so; he then sent for the grand-vicar, and manifested his dissatisfaction to him, and as the latter represented to him the dignity of his position he exclaimed, "What position, if it is necessary for people to be put in prison on my account!" He was not pacified until he had tidings of the release of the offender.

When the tithes were abolished a priest who wanted to obtain an additional sum of money tried to get his Lordship to give him an attestation, stating that his parish had not an adequate revenue. Alphonso did not believe this to be the case, and therefore he refused him. The discontented priest went to see him, and said to him, amongst other insulting things, "We shall see whether you will refuse capons when Christmas comes;" these formed a portion of his income; then in order to show that he could injure him with Procurator-General Fraggiani, he added, "We have Pope Nicholas at Naples, and his arm is powerful." Alphonso seemed as if he did not understand him, and as the grand-vicar wanted to get up in order to speak and to act in the matter, he prevented him. The priest fell ill a

short time afterwards, and his Lordship hastened to visit him, and assisted him until his last moments.

A canon of Ambrosio had to render the accounts of a chaplaincy, and another, who was poor, asked his Lordship to allow him to make the revision. Alphonso willingly acceded to his wishes, as he wanted him to receive the profits of the office. When the episcopal vicar heard of it he went to him and reproached him sharply for being partial and unjust, maintaining that it had always been one of his privileges to regulate the chapel accounts. Alphonso apologised in the most humble manner, and endeavoured to pacify him. On afterwards speaking to the canon of Ambrosio, he expressed his regret at having displeased the vicar; but as the canon was indignant at the pretensions of this latter, he called him dishonest. "I do not mean to say that," interrupted Alphonso; "I did it for the sake of this poor canon; but in future you must remind me that it is for the episcopal vicar to revise these accounts." Alphonso's calmness in the midst of affronts and insult was not natural to him, however; for he had by nature a fiery and irascible temper. It was the happy result of the violent efforts he made to overcome himself and to break off all human attachment in his heart. From the moment he left the world he set the mildness and humility of Jesus Christ before him as his model. Humility and meekness were his aim, reproaches and contempt were his joy, and his happiness consisted in conquering himself.

Archdeacon Rainone, who was once present when a country priest insulted him, said to him, "My Lord, that is not the proper way to act; it is degrading to your character, and encourages the wicked." "Oh, my dear canon," answered the saintly old man, "I have laboured to gain a little patience for forty years, and you want me to lose it in an instant." On another occasion he received a most painful affront. Father Caputo witnessed it; he was exceedingly indignant at it, and wanted his Lordship to punish the daring offender. "Do you not see that he abuses your goodness?" he said to him. His Lordship listened to him, and then said with a sweet smile, "Father Master, I have had no slight struggle to gain a little patience; God knows how much it has cost me. It is the fruit of continued effort; and shall I go and lose it in an instant?" Father Caputo related this incident to me, and on another occasion he wrote to me, saying, "Our saint got such complete mastery over himself, that he appeared to be no more like a man, but like an angel in human form." Archdeacon Rainone also said to me, "I do not know whether he bore insults most like an incarnate angel, or like a perfect man."

Our Father Don Sebastian de Jacobis relates that a theological problem was one day proposed to his Lordship when he was present. It was to decide if mildness is more useful than severity in the guidance of souls. Each one gave his opinion first, and then Alphonso expressed his in the following way: "Mildness is

more in conformity to the spirit of God and of the Gospel." "Learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of heart." "Discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde." Such was the way in which God acted towards Adam the prevaricator, such was that made use of by Jesus Christ towards Judas and the imperfect apostles. What good have the Jansenists done in making God a tyrant? As he took this divine model for that of his own conduct, he never lost sight of any opportunity of acting in conformity to it. "I think I see him now," said Canon Rubini, "always master of himself, kind and affable to all, always serene, and having sweetness on his lips."

A priest who was convicted of falsehood and serious deception against his Lordship, was so far from humbling himself in consequence, that he even uttered a torrent of abusive language against him: "I am on the point of abandoning my house in order not to be under you any longer;" he said to him, amongst other disrespectful things. From the fear of making him still more angry, the saintly man quietly replied, "My son, what do you wish me to say to you? You are right and I am wrong; calm yourself I entreat you;" he then made him sit down near him and tried to persuade him.

Alphonso succeeded in overcoming himself so far, that even the feeling of anger seemed to be absent from him. The priest Don Francis Ferrara, relates that while he was with his Lordship once, an ignorant priest came in, who

set up claims to a prebend of which he was totally unworthy. Alphonso did not wish to express himself openly, so he gave him a tacit refusal, by saying that he had promised it to another. At these words the priest got outrageously angry, and assailed his bishop with the most abusive invectives. "Is it you they call a saint!" he said to him. "A pretty kind of sanctity yours is! He only is a saint who knows how to be just." Alphonso listened in silence, but on seeing that the priest went on, he said to him gently, "This is too much," and taking up his pen again, he went on with his work. The priest went on abusing him in the same tone until he had vented all his spleen. The eye-witness of this scene states that Alphonso seemed like a marble statue all the time, and that he could scarcely even perceive a faint flush which tinged his face, it was so slight. Don Ferrara adds that when the priest retired, Alphonso did not say a word to him about what had just happened.

A layman boldly entered his palace one day, and abused him most insolently. His Lordship bore it all without saying anything, and without in the least losing his serenity. When the scene ended, he went to the seminary, as if nothing had happened. He visited the different classes, manifested great cheerfulness, assisted at the repetitions, and made the youngest pupils sing a pious song. When he retired Father Caputo followed him, and on seeing him so cheerful, he begged him to diminish the amount of the pen-

sion for a poor young man with whom he was greatly satisfied. The bishop granted him all he asked with pleasure. When he went away, and Father Caputo heard the insult he had received just before this visit, he was stupified, and could not sufficiently admire the immoveable sweetness of the saintly bishop.

One day when he was at the church of St. Agatha, clothed in his pontifical vestments, a dispute arose between several priests at the very moment when he was going to get ready to go to the altar; and in the heat of the contest, the key of the chest where the requisite things were kept was refused to the priest who had to give them to him. The priest was irritated, and went to the prelate, and accused his adversary of having acted thus out of contempt for the bishop. "How foolish you are!" coldly replied his Lordship; "why should I disquiet myself for such a trifle? I do not see any contempt in the matter; let us have patience and they will get pacified."

One day he told the servant Alexis to go to the administrator of the Annunziata, and ask for his kind assistance in behalf of a poor woman whom he had converted. The administrator was in a bad humour at the time, and sent the bishop, the woman, and the servant about their business. The indignant servant repeated the speech to Alphonso, and as he blamed the administrator his Lordship said to him, "Be silent, he is a holy man. Who knows what was the matter with him? Go back again to-

morrow, and you will see that he will give you a large donation." And so it was; the servant went and received more than thirty carlins.

The good bishop's meekness towards those of his household was no less admirable. When they annoyed him in any way, his greatest complaint was to say, "How foolish you are!" or else, "May you become a saint!" If the matter were one of consequence, and he saw no way of remedying it, he raised his eyes to heaven, and gently murmured, "God's will be done;" and if he could not control some emotion, he used to exclaim, "Gloria Patri," &c. The canon, Don S. Carfora, told me that he always exercised extraordinary mildness towards a priest belonging to his palace, who treated him as if he were his inferior. Every one was indignant at the effrontery and impertinence of this priest; his Lordship alone never showed the least emotion at it.

He one day gently reproved a cleric who was writing under his dictation; the cleric, whether through stupidity or malice, threw the papers down in a heap on the table, and then hastily and angrily retired. When Alphonso thought he had got calm again, he sent for him: "Well," he said to him, "why did you do such a thing? Do you know that you vexed me; now go on writing again."

If the insult concerned himself only, Alphonso made no resistance, but if the honour of God and the welfare of souls were in any way concerned, he became terrible as a lion.

A man in power and of a very respectable family went to ask him for something which he could not in conscience grant. On seeing that Alphonso persisted in his refusal, he began to assume a haughty tone in speaking to him. When his Lordship saw his importunity, he said to him in an authoritative way, "Give over your pretensions, I cannot listen to them." These few words sufficed to disconcert the gentleman, who immediately began to make apologies.

Another gentleman of the diocese, who was rich, but who dissipated all his possessions in gaming, had a son at the seminary, and, on the plea of poverty, he wanted him to be kept there for half the pension. His Lordship wished to correct him, so he refused his request. The gentleman then raised his voice and tried to obtain it by intimidating his Lordship. Alphonso resorted to his authority upon this, and said to him, "But do you know how unbending I am?" he then struck the table with the back of his hand, and added, "When I tell you that I ought not to do the thing for God's sake, you might as well give it up." We could give a thousand instances of this truly apostolical firmness. Father Caputo, who lived in his intimacy, was in the habit of saying, "When this old man wants to assume an imposing air and to manifest his authority, he intimidates and terrifies one." This was not however in the least the result of pride or haughtiness, but from the feeling he had of his dignity. Archdeacon

Rainone told me that a presumptuous canon pretended that he had been wronged in not having received his benefice soon enough, and complained of it to his Lordship, in terms which caused every one who was present to blush. Alphonso saw that his honour was compromised, and said to him calmly, "Do not forget that I am bishop?" These simple words restored the canon to a sense of his duty. One day Don Pascal Deodatus, who was afterwards priest of Bucciano, was dissatisfied with Alphonso's having forbidden him to read a book by the Abbè Genovese, and wrote to him in a disrespectful manner, even threatening to appeal to the prince. He soon repented of what he had done, believing that he had cause to dread the bishop's anger; but Alphonso sent for him and received him with his accustomed kindness, and was satisfied with merely saying, "What! is that the way in which you write to a bishop?" This was all the correction he gave, but he did it with so much calmness and dignity, that Don Pascal remained confounded at it.

The feast of the Rosary drew a great crowd of people to Sancta Maria de Vico. His Lordship wished to preach there after vespers, and wrote to the prior asking that the procession should take place before twelve. The dissatisfied prior left his confessional and went to the oratory to consult his religious. They all clamoured against this arrangement as being contrary to custom, and he returned for answer that the pro-

cession should not take place either in the morning or evening, and that the church should be shut after vespers. At these tidings Alphonso sent for Mgr. Puoti, the Archbishop of Amalfi. The prelate considered this a great contempt of authority, and told him that if the same thing had happened to him, he would have put the church under an interdict. Alphonso did not wish to resort to such extreme measures, so he sent for his secretary and made him write to the prior, that he was his bishop, and that he would preach in his church in any case. He went; and in spite of the bad reception he received, he calmly ordered the procession to take place, after which he preached. At the end of the sermon he assembled the prior and the religious together, and set the impropriety of their conduct before them, but with so much sweetness and modesty that the whole monastery were made conscious of the fault they had committed.

It was not without suffering an interior pang that our saint decided on resorting to firmness. "You cannot imagine," he wrote to one of his penitents at Naples, "how much it costs me to treat certain persons with severity; and I think that one succeeds better by gentleness than by violence." He was once seen to weep in giving a severe reprimand to a gentleman whose deplorable conduct had not yielded to repeated warnings. An eye-witness told me that this licentious man could not help being affected himself, notwithstanding his being so har-

dened. Often after uttering words which he thought a little too strong, Alphonso would think of some pretext for recalling the person to whom they were addressed, and giving him some token of kindness. Thus having on one occasion spoken authoritatively to the doctor of Ambrosio, he sent for him on the following day to feel his pulse. "He was very well however," said the doctor to me, "but he made use of this innocent stratagem to show me that he felt no ill-will towards me."

The dominion which he had gained over himself also enabled him to rule over the hearts of others. "It is not easy to believe the impression which Mgr. Liguori made on the minds of others by his gentleness," said Fr. Eanti. A serious quarrel arose in the family of Donna Catherine Lucca, on the subject of the religious vocation of her two daughters. Some of them wished them to remain in the convent at Airola, where they were pensioners; others wanted them to go to that of the Holy Redeemer recently established at St. Agatha. The difference became so serious, that the interests of the young ladies were in danger of being compromised. In this strait Donna Catherine had recourse to his Lordship. Alphonso sent for the two uncles of the children, and a word from him sufficed to make all parties agree.

One day the cook, who had forced Alphonso to give him an assistant for the dirty work, had a dispute with this latter, who carried it so far as to run after him with a knife. The

poor servant ran to take refuge in his Lordship's room, and held the door firmly closed; but the scullion, who seemed determined to kill him, pushed at the door violently from the outside. Alphonso ordered it to be immediately opened, and with a few words succeeded in completely calming the infuriated scullion. The grand-vicar and all the others wished this man to be imprisoned and dismissed; but the saintly bishop only sought to reconcile him to the cook, and he succeeded so well that these two servants were the best possible friends from that time.

We may justly say that Mgr. Liguori's meekness was perfect. "There is nothing," said he, "which is more unseemly in a bishop than anger. A bishop who gives way to this passion, is no longer the father of his flock; he is an intractable tyrant, who draws down the hatred of every one." Brother Francis Anthony, who lived with our saint for fifty years, and I, who was in intimate intercourse with him for forty, attest, that whether in his relations with us or with strangers, he constantly evinced unalterable sweetness and equanimity, however annoying that intercourse might sometimes be. Don Mariano Arcieri, the priest, who was a man whose sanctity made him venerable, never called him anything but the Francis de Sales of our age.

CHAPTER LXIII.

As the inseparable companion of meekness is humility, so Mgr. Liguori, who was a model of sweetness, rendered himself no less admirable by the low opinion he had of himself. Being entirely detached from the world, wherein he saw nothing but illusion and vanity, he seemed to have forgotten that which he once had been, and to seek for nothing but obscurity and contempt. He no longer thought of the nobility of his origin, nor of the great achievements of his forefathers, and if any one attempted to speak to him of them he immediately stopped them. We were sitting at dinner one day with his Lordship at St. Agatha, when the conversation fell upon a famous duel in which his father was engaged when he was seventy years of age; he blushed, and did not say a word, and his example imposed silence. On another occasion some one talked a great deal about the honours and dignities which his cousin, Don Charles Cabalieri had enjoyed at Mantua, as governor of that town, far from taking pleasure in all this, Alphonso thought it a matter for sorrow: "How much more I should rejoice," said he, "at hearing him praised for having been full of virtue! How much more cause should I have for pride, had his death been that of a saint!"

He never allowed the title of Excellency to be addressed to him, and if any one made use of it, he stopped him short: "This title of Excellency does not concern me; the title of Most Illustrious which the Church authorises is quite enough; but that of Excellency is not recognised by her." His persevering way of rejecting this title was such, that every one in the diocese gave it up in spite of the habit of using it to the bishops who were his predecessors.

As he delighted in serving others, and never in being waited on himself, Mgr. Liguori was himself like one of the servants in his own house; he made his bed himself, dressed his own issue, and never allowed a valet to come near his person. Although Bishop of St. Agatha, he seemed rather to consider himself the sacristan. "By God's grace," he one day said, "I have never felt vain-glorious. Once only, when I was being incensed on my throne, I felt a sort of pleasing sensation. Now, see," he added, "see how the devil tried to tempt me." When he went out of his palace, he never would be accompanied by more than one priest whoever that one might be. A strange dealer who sold spectacles, happened to meet him one day, and being deceived by his air of extreme simplicity, he thought he was speaking to a poor priest; he therefore approached him and said to him, "If your Reverence wants a pair of spectacles, I have excellent ones here." When he heard that this was the bishop, the dealer hurried off in great confusion as fast as possible. He very often went out alone. One

day after he had finished his visit, he sent for the sacristan, (who was a layman,) and he went through the town without any other companion, to go to the convent of the Holy Redeemer. Every one was surprised to see him arrive in such a way; some persons hastened to inform some of the canons of it, they immediately ran up to the convent, and the bishop was astonished at being the object of so much attention. The canons, on their finding out this manner of proceeding, several times complained to the persons belonging the episcopal house, that they were not warned when he went out by the usual ringing of bells; but that was precisely what Alphonso did not wish for.

When he went to church to visit the Blessed Sacrament or for some other private devotion, he went alone. It several times happened that he came too soon and found the door shut; in such cases he patiently waited until the arrival of the sacristan. When he arrived alone in this way, he would not allow a cushion to be put on his chair, and as the servant who accompanied him, knew his wishes, he took care to take it away if it had been placed there.

The slightest mark of deference was distasteful to him, thus when he went out in the carriage, he would not allow the secretary or any other priest to seat themselves in the front part of the carriage; and he never consented to take the right side unless it were quite indispensable to do so. Even at Naples he made his grand-vicar take it, who was distressed at such preeminence,

but who was obliged to yield through obedience, and in order to avoid vexing his superior. His Lordship also had an equal horror of that domineering spirit in the clergy to which St. Peter had such horror, he even manifested submissiveness towards the lowest amongst his servants, to whom he never spoke except in these terms: "Do me the kindness.....I beg you to do such a thing.....Have patience.....Please to do that," &c.....No word ever issued from his mouth which denoted command or superiority. He was above all most respectful in his expressions towards ecclesiastics. I heard from Pascal Bartolini the priest, that during the whole time he ruled over the diocese, he never allowed any priest to wait on him, even when he was paralyzed and in bed. "One day when I was in his room," said the priest, "he did not venture to say to me, 'Give me that pen,' but he rang the bell to summon the lay-brother, who he had to attend on him."

Even when he gave an order to a priest relating to his office, he did so in the form of a request. Don Bartolini gave the spiritual exercises to the nuns at Arienzo, and as they were satisfied with them, they begged his Lordship to let him remain two days longer with them. When dinner-time came, Alphonso said to the priest, "Don Pascal, the nuns would like to have you for two days more." "Your Lordship can dispose of me; you have but to command, and I will obey," was his reply. "Very true," replied Alphonso, "but a superior ought to be discreet."

If however he were resisted in a thing he had a right to demand, he then remembered that he was bishop, and changed his tone into one of firmness, but he always spoke in a polite tone, and never said anything offensive. All priests were the objects of his particular veneration, and he was always full of respect for them. He was in the habit of saying that a tone of superiority and disdain can only diminish the authority of a bishop. He was no less considerate in his letters. When he wrote to the episcopal vicars and to the priests, he gave them the title of Most Illustrious, and he was as respectful towards those whom he cited before his tribunal. Thus he liked to give what he would not receive, for we have seen how painful it was to him to be addressed by honourable titles himself.

Religious were also the objects of his consideration, as we have said. And, although he was the bishop, when he had to deal with any superior of a monastery, he almost put himself in the position of a subject. Having gone to the Capuchin Fathers on St. Anthony's day, while he was at Arienzo, and seeing that there was a crowd of people in the church, he said to the father guardian, in the most humble tone, "Father Guardian, if you allow of it, I should like to say a few words to these people." Such great humility astonished the father guardian, as well as all who were present. He treated all kinds of ecclesiastics in office with the same deference, in regard to the affairs relating to

their church, and he addressed the priests, and above all the canons, in the same way, when he wanted to officiate at an unusual time in any church.

Like a tender father he enjoyed to see himself surrounded by all his children, great and small. He could not even allow the simplest cleric to remain standing, and all who went to see him were admitted to his table, if they came in the morning. Thus no pompous invitation was needed beforehand to enable persons to be admitted to it. Every priest and even every layman who came to see him, might hope to dine with him. He disliked having his hand kissed, and he did not even present it to the clergy unless they manifested a wish for it, and then he did so unwillingly. The most vulgar peasants, those who were the very poorest and meanest were never received with harshness, on the contrary, he liked to converse with them, and to inquire into their affairs and their wants. "During my life, I have known two bishops who were thorough gentlemen," said Father Don Januarius Fatigati to me, "who took pleasure in being with the very poorest people, and who treated them with familiarity, they were Mgr. Borgia and Mgr. Liguori."

Alphonso's humility did not rest in giving a gracious reception to others; he had such entire modesty that it made him believe that he was himself nothing; he appeared to entertain the lowest opinion of himself. His profound knowledge caused him to be consulted on the

most delicate affairs; recourse was had to him from all parts of Italy, and even from beyond the mountains. And yet he never decided anything of consequence, without himself taking advice. "We always acted with the greatest humility and prudence," said Archdeacon Rainone; "when any affair or question presented any difficulty, he immediately ordered consultations to be held about it; and he always behaved as if he had been incapable of deciding anything himself!" He often even took the opinion of persons of but moderate talent; he was never obstinate in his opinions, and never hesitated in submitting his opinion to that of another, when he thought it more in accordance with the truth. He was the first to condemn himself, if he happened to make any mistake. He did this with joy, and always manifested gratitude for the explanations he had received. But if it happened that he was wrongfully condemned, he was equally sincere, exposed his reasons with candour, and justified himself without blaming others. I have heard Canon Barba say, that Alphonso made honourable mention of a common-place writer, in one of the books which he published while he was bishop; this author, not satisfied with having bitterly censured an opinion which Alphonso had had grounds for defending, also wrote a letter to him, which was as indiscreet as it was impertinent, and in which he did not scruple to call him an impostor; Alphonso received this foolish apostrophe with the greatest calmness, and took care not to complain of it

even to Canon Barba, who, as he knew, was the friend of his detractor.

A foreign merchant also put Alphonso's meekness and humility to the proof. This man called himself a convert from Protestantism, but I rather think he was an impudent liar. After he had obtained the ordinary letter of recommendation to the diocese from the grand-vicar, he said that he wished to speak to his Lordship. When he was in his presence he began to talk of the divers works which Alphonso had published; he did not scruple boldly to blame several of his opinions, which he accused of being scandalous and untenable; he at length went so far as to treat him as an ignorant fool to his very face. Alphonso did not know what to think of it, and defended his opinions with humility, without losing his affability. Canon Albanese who was present, could not understand such excessive lowliness: "I cannot imagine how you managed to bear it," he afterwards said to his Lordship. Alphonso only answered by a sweet smile; he then added, that very likely he was a Jansenist. Don Joseph Remondini, wished to give an increased value to Alphonso's Morals, so he begged him in the January of 1762, to have his portrait taken, and to send him the drawing. Alphonso could not help laughing at such a request. "As to the portrait," he answered him, "that would throw discredit on the work; is it fitting for an author to have his picture taken while he is alive?.....When I shall be no more, let them do what they please with

my body; I care but little; but during my life, I wish no notice to be taken of me, and that my name may never be quoted anywhere. I have put it in my books, it is true; but that was to excite the curiosity of people, and to get them to read them, otherwise I should have had them printed without my name." His secretary Verzalla made use of some solicitations on this subject, at the instigation of Remondini: "Do not speak to me more about that," said his Lordship to him, "my work would not gain more credit, but on the contrary, it would be depreciated in value if the head of such a mummy were put in it." If we have his portrait, we owe it to his servant Alexis, and to this same canon, who, being pressed by fresh entreaties from Remondini the bookseller, secretly made a hole in the door of the room where Alphonso dined; and thus the painter was able to trace his features whilst he took his repast.

The arms of his house were to be seen only in the chapter, they were neither to be found in the church nor in his palace; and the seals which he used, bore no other impression than a cross or a calvary. There was a magnifiecnt chasuble in the treasury of his cathedral, of cloth, which had been left there by Mgr. Danza. Alphonso wanted to have a complete set of vestments of the same sort, and he added some of his own money to what the church funds could supply, and ordered a cope, dalmatics, a humeral veil, and cushions, to match from Naples. When these things arrived at St. Agatha, the

canons fancied that the sight of the arms of Mgr. Danza, would be offensive to the present bishop, they therefore had them immediately taken to pieces, and they were just going to send them back to Naples, to have the arms of Liguori affixed instead. Alphonso heard of it, and declared that it mattered little, that these vestments were adorned by Mgr. Danza's cipher, and he asked if the ceremonies wherein this cipher would appear, would be of less value. He therefore made them replace everything as the embroiderer had put it. Talking of vestments, I will add another incident. His brother Hercules profited by an opportunity which offered of buying a magnificently embroidered vestment at a very reasonable price, which he made a present of to the Bishop of St. Agatha. He had it made into a chasuble and dalmatics, and rejected the proposition which the canons made of placing his arms on them, giving as the reason for his refusal that what he had spent in the making of these things was not out of his personal income, but that he had taken it from the episcopal revenues, of which he did not consider himself to be the owner.

While Alphonso thus declined all personal privileges, he also forbade all his household to take advantage of the position they held in the least degree. Don John Baptist Mustillo, the general agent of the Duke of Maddalon, said on this head, "In the time of the former bishops no one dared to offend, to molest, or to bring before the courts of justice any of those

who were attached to the bishop's establishment, such as farmers, &c., but in the time of Mgr. Liguori, the horror which he had for all sorts of unjust pre-eminence caused him to abolish these privileges." Don Mustillo adds, "that on the other hand, Don Liguori did not fail to render charitable assistance to all who were cited before the local court for debt or other misfortunes." The following is the last proof we shall give of his profound humility. As founder of the congregation and superior general, he had a right to employ any member of the congregation whatsoever in all his wants as he might please; but it was not thus that he acted. Father Villani had destined Father Don Angelo Majone for St. Agatha, but he did not like such a tranquil kind of life, and manifested repugnance to it. Father Villani sent him to give a mission at Gaeta, in order to overcome his aversion, and informed his Lordship of it. "This news has given me great pain," answered Alphonso; "I want an able subject who can assist me in preaching, and whom I may daily consult in a multitude of difficult cases; for I am surrounded by a thousand difficulties which arise on all sides; but God wills it to be thus, and His will be done." He was aware of the repugnance which Father Majone felt at remaining with him, and wished much to overcome it, but without having recourse to violence, and he confined himself to persuasion, he therefore added, "Try and get him to aid me willingly; me a poor old man loaded with trials and cares. Tell him

that he will thereby be sure of doing God's will, and that he will do me a great charity. I like him because he leads an edifying and retired life, and because he does not meddle with anything that does not concern him; besides, he is a good adviser and a good preacher; I say willingly, for otherwise it would be better for him not to come; for he would then be more burthensome than useful." The fact is, it required solid virtue to remain with his Lordship, and neither Father Majone, nor those who followed him, had the courage to attach themselves to him, and the poor old man never had the consolation during his whole episcopate of meeting with any one sufficiently devoted to be able to share a life so painful to human nature for any length of time.

CHAPTER LXIV.

Whilst Alphonso laboured to assist his children in the wants of their souls, he neglected not the relief of their bodily necessities. Full of love for all works of mercy, enjoined in the Gospel, he said that a bishop is specially bound to perform them. So the numerous poor of his diocese were the first objects of his charity. He saw in them a living image of Jesus Christ, and he thought he was incessantly hearing the words, "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me."

Every one agrees in saying that there was not an hour in the day, in which he was not seen, purse in hand, giving liberally to all. The canon Don Hyacinthe Morgillo told me, that on the Wednesdays and Fridays of each week, he had a general and public distribution of alms; but this was only a certain form, when any assistance was needed, all days were alike to him, none were exempted. The saintly bishop's palace was open to all the indigent, and he never sent any one away until he had relieved his wants. The grand-vicar Nicholas Rubini affirms, that after subtracting what was necessary to pay the grand-vicar's salary, and for the monthly salary to which the chaplain, the cook, and the attendant were entitled, and also for the expenses of the table, all the rest of his income was destined for alms, or else to meet the outlay which the suppression of disorders entailed. According to Father Caputo's testimony, "Alphonso could not do more than he did to relieve the indigent in all their wants. He was himself poor and needy, and he was sometimes for whole days without having anything left to give." Archdeacon Rainone one day saw the hall of the palace filled by the poor: some asked for salt, others for lard, some for sugar, others for delicacies for their sick relatives at home. He was particularly careful in signing bonds, in exchange for which the apothecary was bound to furnish remedies; and he gave quinine and other simple medicines with which he was provided to those who required them.

He was actuated by the goodness of his heart, and made no distinction between a piece of copper or one of silver: "He generally gave from five to six grains at least to each person," said our Father Buonopane to me. Archdeacon Rainone one day tried to represent to him the excess of his generosity, and asked him what would remain for himself when he had given all away, reminding him that summer is not unending, and that the wants of winter are still greater. "Providence is never at a loss," replied Alphonso. A light from on high directed his alms. Alexis the servant relates that when he announced any poor person his Lordship was in the habit of giving him a considerable sum of money; if the same poor person came back again, his Lordship diminished the alms each time, without personally seeing him. But if he were asked for charity for others, he again gave the large sum.

During the bad weather in winter when the poor cannot work, his charity became still more striking. "In bad weather," said Don Angelo Sgambati to me, "he was in the habit of spending among the poor six, nine, and even ten ducats a day." His finances very often became exhausted, and when he had nothing more to give his Lordship was greatly distressed, and wrote to Canon Cesare, his steward at St. Agatha, for fresh supplies to enable him to enter into new charities. He ran short of money during one winter, he therefore wrote to Don John Marco of Airola, that having consumed all his corn,

and having nothing more to give, he must entreat him to procure him some vegetables. "He was so generous in his alms," Canon Michella said to me, "that he not only deprived himself of what was necessary for himself and for his family, but he did not hesitate even to contract heavy debts for the relief of the destitute. "Repeatedly," said Canon Sabatin Cerisci, "I went to Don Leonard d' Ambrosio to borrow fifty, a hundred, and even two hundred ducats for him." When he could find no one to lend him anything, he made up his mind, to have recourse to the liberality of the great, especially of the Prince of la Riccia. The duchess of Maddalon also sent him several hundred ducats at once, which were specially intended for the poor of St. Agatha and of Arienzo.

The diocese of St. Agatha possesses sixty-four very rich chapels. As the bishop has the administration of them, Alphonso put aside enough to meet the expense of keeping them up and for the services in them; and all the rest went for the relief of the poor, whether to provide for orphans, or to clothe the nakedness of a great number of other indigent persons. He was so lavish in his alms that he sometimes obliged the rectors of these chapels to contract debts. Although several of these same churches were withdrawn from his administration, Alphonso did not lose courage, and he managed so well with regard to the new managers, that they still distributed many alms according to his wishes. The interests of the poor were preferred to those of all

others. Thus when he was expecting the first visit of his brother Don Hercules, with his bride Donna Marianne Capano Ursini at St. Agatha, the grand-vicar and others told the pious bishop that he ought to think of making some present to his sister-in-law; he consented; but they were much astonished when they saw that his present consisted in a garland of flowers which he had himself received as a gift; and when the trifling nature of the thing he had selected was mentioned to him, Alphonso replied, "Do you then wish that I should take away from the poor in order to make presents to my sister-in-law?" The lady took pleasure in prolonging her stay at St. Agatha, but his Lordship felt distress at the expenses which this caused him; for this reason, as he did not see any signs of departure, he ingenuously said to his brother, "It would be very pleasant to me to keep you here longer, but how can I meet the expense it would entail? All my money comes from the Church, and what one takes from the Church, one takes from the poor also."

Alphonso had such a love for those in distress, that when he received any one into his service, he always gave the preference to the poorest. He was in want of a secretary at Arienzo, and as two canditates offered, he asked which of them was the poorest, whether Don Custode Froisi or Virgil Cimino. "They are both fit for it," he said to the grand-vicar, "but I hear that Don Virgil is poor." And he therefore fixed on the latter, although he had a tender love for Don Custode.

A prior who had been recently elected among the Dominican fathers of Sancta Maria de Vico, sent him three pounds of excellent fish; his Lordship thought it right to accept it, and to manifest his satisfaction at the gift, especially as he wanted to show that he felt no resentment for an annoyance which he had received from these fathers some days before. When Brother Francis Anthony read the spiritual lecture that same day, out of the Life of the Venerable Bartholomew, he came to the passage where it says, that the Archbishops of Prague were in the habit of sending a certain fish to the king every year on the occasion of a particular solemnity, and that the Venerable Bartholomew, in consideration of the expense which this caused, resolved to employ the money in the service of the poor. As soon as his Lordship heard this passage he said to the brother, "Tomorrow there will be a fair at Maddalon; take care to sell the fish and give the money in charity." It was objected that it was too trifling a thing, and that the payment of the porter for his day's work would amount to more than the fish was worth. "I know nothing about all that," replied his Lordship, "do as I tell you."

Not content with assisting the indigent who presented themselves at the palace, his Lordship took care to anticipate the wants of the bashful poor, and always ordered the priests to make them known to him. "I know," said Father Raphael of Buvo, of the monastery of St. Peter of Alcantara, "how many entire families he se-

cretly supplied with provisions and clothing; to one he allotted ten carlins a month, to another thirty, and to a third five or six ducats, and even more, according to their station and the number of individuals to be provided for.

A young orphan of rank was destitute of relations, and lived in the greatest misery. When his Lordship heard of her situation he sent her a pretty considerable sum of money, through the medium of her parish priest, and he then continued to send her a monthly allowance.

A lady who had several children was in great distress on account of her husband's being a professed gambler. When his Lordship heard of this unfortunate woman, he hastened to supply her with half a measure of corn every month, unknown to her husband; but he found it out, and got some one to go for the alms in the name of his wife, and when he received it he had the corn ground, and sold the flour and gambled with the proceeds. His Lordship, in embarrassment what to do, sent three measures of corn to the wife during the absence of her husband; but on hearing that he had again got hold of it, he determined secretly to send the poor mother a monthly allowance through the hands of the priest.

Alphonso's dislike to visits is well known. Yet he took pleasure in seeing certain unfortunate noblemen in private. Thus Don Anthony Scottino, the guardian of the palace of the Prince de la Riccia, told me that during his sojourn at Airola the Bishop of St. Agatha was really glad

to see every evening an indigent nobleman who was the father of a large family. He relieved his poverty by exercising the most refined delicacy in deceiving the very excusable pride of this nobleman.

One of the king's officers, who was a good man, but a stranger, was also in want, on account of having a large family whom he was unable to supply with all they required. He informed Alphonso of his position, and received six ducats a month during the whole time that his regiment remained at St. Agatha.

A very poor canon, although a noble and the treasurer of the collegiate church, was also the object of Alphonso's liberality. One evening when he was at his Lordship's with Canon d' Ambrosio, he frankly said to Alphonso, that he had had two pigs killed, but that he had no salt to dress them with. "What do you want me to do?" replied Alphonso. "Cannot your Lordship guess?" responded the treasurer. "Well," answered Alphonso, "there is Don Mark Antony, he will be able to assist you." As this latter said that he could not possibly supply what was wanting, Alphonso said, turning to the treasurer, "How much salt do you require?" "At least twelve *rotolo*." His Lordship then sent for the lay-brother, and told him to give the canon the needful sum.

It was especially in secret alms that Alphonso's charity was most remarkable. "He who is a bishop," he was in the habit of saying, "ought to think a great deal about the poor whose tears

no one thinks of drying: it is they who are chiefly recommended to us by Jesus Christ." One day when he was with Mgr. Bergame, the Bishop of Gaeta, and Mgr. Tosti, the Bishop of Fondi, who were both his penitents, he asked them in what way they regulated their alms. "As to that," answered Mgr. Bergame, "I do not believe that I am in fault; thanks be to God, I give largely to all that ask of me." "It strikes me that you act as a priest and not as a bishop: you do not understand the meaning of these words of the gospel: Let not your left hand know what your right hand giveth. I advise you to think of almsgiving in secret, of widows, of families in trouble, and of the poor who conceal themselves."

Alphonso, who was liberal towards all the poor, was prodigal when through their poverty they were in danger of offending God. Don Custode Froisi, the priest, relates that when he was treasurer of the parish of Talanico, he found a number of families who, through poverty, huddled all their children together in the same bed; he informed Alphonso of it, who hastened to procure them beds. And in such cases he was as prompt as he was liberal.

The canon Carfora told me, that he one day heard that a poor old woman had six children of both sexes, of a tolerable age, who all shared the same bed. Alphonso was horrified at this. "O God," he exclaimed, "send for Brother Francis Anthony directly;" he instantly sent the poor woman all that was necessary to remedy this sad state of things.

Amongst the privileged poor as Alphonso called them, were the Capuchinesses of St. Peter of Alcantara, the poor nuns of the convent of St. Philip Neri, and those of the new convent of the Most Holy Redeemer. Independently of alms in money, he supplied them with a store of oil, corn, and wine each year. Our saint's charity, however, was not confined to St. Agatha and to Arienzo, it embraced the poor of the whole diocese. The money that he received during his pastoral visitations, was remitted to the episcopal vicars, to be distributed among poor families. If he found a petition from a poor person in the number which came to him from all parts of the diocese, he was accustomed to say in a joyous manner, "Ah," this pleases me, it is a request for charity."

As his charity towards the poor was generally known, even strangers came to ask for it; but as he was often unable to satisfy them, he said sorrowfully, "Charity must be regulated; if I have not enough to give to my own poor, how can I give to others?" The priest of St. Agatha asked him for an annuity for a person who did not reside in the diocese. "You know very well," he replied on the 3rd of September, 1774, "that I am bound to assist all the poor in my diocese; now, they are so numerous that I cannot tell how to find enough to do it. However, tell Canon Joachim de Cesare in my name, to give four carlins a month to the person of whom you speak to me. I am poor, and I cannot give more."

Another indigent person who did not belong to his diocese often came to ask him for alms; as he was sensible of the distress of this unfortunate man, who appeared to have sprung from a good family, Alphonso was in the habit of sending from ten to fifteen carlins through Brother Francis Anthony. This unfortunate man loudly complained to the brother one day, and told him that the alms he got were insufficient. His Lordship happened to come out of his room at this moment, and heard these words of discontent. "My son," he said to him, "I am overburthened with poor, and I know not what more I can sell for their aid; be satisfied with that for the present, and God will provide the rest." However, as the stranger went away murmuring, and with a bad grace, his Lordship took compassion on his distress, he sent for him again and ordered twenty carlins to be given to him.

The pilgrims also did not ask for his assistance in vain, especially if they insisted on it. One Saturday evening when he returned from the cathedral where he had preached, a pilgrim who stated that he was of noble birth and a recent convert, asked him for an alms: his Lordship told his secretary to give him two carlins; the other refused them, saying that that was not enough. Alphonso heard these complaints in his room, and hastened to add something to the sum; but on the pilgrim's requiring still more, Alphonso ordered him all that he had asked for.

Alphonso bought a great quantity of cloth and divers species of merchandise every year, that he might clothe the naked in proportion to their wants. Those even, who were not in absolute want, applied to him, on seeing his liberality: "Why should we lose our share," said they, "we also desire to profit by his gifts."

The inhabitants of the village of Cava, which is an appendage of Arienzo, are almost all attacked by goitres, on account of the unhealthiness of the country. A woman of this place went one day to see Alphonso, accompanied by her daughter, for whom she told him that she had an offer of marriage, but that she did not know how to get a *tonnino*. His Lordship could not make out what sort of a thing a *tonnino* was, so the secretary asked the woman for an explanation of the word, when she replied that it was a collar of small gold beads for the ornament of the neck. The secretary burst out laughing, and said that all the *tonnini* in the world would not be enough to ornament a neck like that. His Lordship smiled, but touched with compassion, he caused the woman to get ten carlins; and as she insisted on having more, he added four carlins besides. Such extended liberality could not fail to be abused, and so his Lordship was several times the dupe of the hypocritical poor. Several of their cheating tricks came to the ears of his friends, and particularly to those of Dean Daddio, and they did not fail to warn him of it. Alphonso replied without any astonishment, "That does me no

harm; it is better to give an unnecessary alms and to be cheated, that to run the risk of being reproved for not having given what was necessary."

CHAPTER LXV.

Alphonso, who never forgot any of his spiritual children, had the most compassionate tenderness for those who were confined to bed by illness, and thus rendered unable to work.

When he heard of the illness of any poor person, he did not fail to supply him with eatables and medicine, and to send him money for all that he required; he even visited him in person. As soon as five o'clock struck he ceased his labours, and his relaxation was to go and console the sick who were in the greatest suffering, without omitting those whose misery made them repulsive. He generally paid these visits accompanied only by Alexis the servant, or at most by some one priest. His solicitude was redoubled in the case of the dying; he left everything to go and prepare them to make a good end.

When his servant Alexis became ill, his Lordship went several times to console him by his presence. One day he left four ducats for his wife; and as she was hopeless, as the doctors had given her cause to fear for her husband's life, he said that he would continue

her husband's wages to her as long as he himself should live.

When he heard that there was any incurable in the diocese, he caused him to be taken to one of the hospitals at Naples at his own expense; and these cases were not rare; as he often had not enough to assist them with himself, he applied to the administrators of the chapels, and to other persons. Mother Raphael, the foundress of the new convent of the Holy Redeemer at St. Agatha, informed him, while he was at Arienzo, of the lamentable state of a poor woman who was neglected by the doctors; Alphonso was without any money at the time, so he wrote to Canon Albanese saying, "Tell Mother Raphael that she must try and procure something from the chapels, and that I will supply the rest, so that the sick woman may be sent to Naples."

There was nothing which he more inculcated on the priests, than the care of the sick, particularly if they were poor and desolate. When he found any disinclination to visiting them, or negligence in administering the sacraments to them, he then lost sight of his usual sweetness, and threatened to reprove them. If a sick person had a lingering illness, he wished the confessors and the priest to persuade the sufferer to receive the holy communion frequently. He thought that the viaticum ought to be repeated according to circumstances; and he reprobated the abuse of waiting until the sick are at the last extremity before administering extreme unction to them.

Although he was admirably attentive in these respects in the very first years of his episcopate, he appeared even more so when he became paralytic and broken down by infirmities. What I am going to relate would seem to be incredible, if all the territory of Arienzo had not, as one may say, been eye-witnesses of it. It is Don Gaetan Mancusi the priest, who says in a letter which he wrote to me from Avigliano, "On my return from Sicily in 1773 I was filled with admiration at seeing his Lordship practise certain acts of charity, above all, those towards the sick. He numbered seventy-seven years, and although himself infirm, paralytic, and nearly sinking under the weight of old age, he still continued to go about the neighbourhood and to visit the sick. To see an old man all wasted away, his head bent down, and his chin striking against his chest, so weak as to require not only the aid of my arm in getting in and out of the carriage, but also of that of Alexis his attendant; to see I say, such an old man enter into houses to visit the most suffering objects therein was a sight which filled me with admiration, and I could not contemplate it without shedding tears. I one day asked him how he could still visit the sick, he who daily received the visits of two medical men. 'What sort of charity should I have,' he replied, 'if I were not able to suffer something for the benefit of my children? Oh! how much greater are the obligations of a bishop than those of any other Christian, I will even say of any other ecclesiastic! The shepherd who wishes

to watch over his flock properly, ought not to forget the sick sheep, but must take care of them in proportion to the magnitude of their wants.' His arrival amongst the sick was not without profit to them; he did not testify a mere barren compassion for them. The sight of a bishop so enfeebled and pressed down with infirmity, would of itself have sufficed to strike them as much as the most eloquent words; besides this, he exhorted them to patience, and encouraged them to accept their sickness as a penance sent them from God; he disposed them to receive the sacrament, he filled them with love and confidence towards the Blessed Virgin, whose picture he always gave to them. He inquired into their wants, and did not leave them without giving them an alms. During the time that I was at Arienzo, I had the consolation of accompanying him on three of these charitable visitations."

He redoubled his solicitude, as the grand-vicar Rubini testified, towards those who were ill and tormented by scruples, or to whom any fatal accident had happened; in such cases, even if he were at dinner, he quitted everything to go to their immediate assistance, and to dispose them to make a good confession. In one of these cases he met with a singular surprise. One day when he was at the episcopal palace at Arienzo, which faces the college, he saw that the Holy Viaticum was being carried to some place in the neighbourhood, and he asked where it had been taken. Some one replied by the one word, "Peccatore." Upon that he was

troubled and alarmed, and believing that the sick person was a great sinner, he sent to inquire what signs of repentance he had given. Canon d' Ambrosio then saw the mistake, and said to him, "Peccatore is the name of this sick person; but he is a good man." However his Lordship was not at all satisfied, and crawled to the house of the dying man; he examined into his state of mind, and was satisfied as to his probity and piety.

On another occasion he heard that a villager had received a mortal wound; he immediately hurried off to see him, he administered consolation to him, and led him to pardon his enemy. He repeated his visit daily while the sick man lived, and took care to send him provisions for himself and for all his family. After the death of the wounded man, his old mother was so overcome by the saintly bishop's words, that she pardoned the murderer, and Alphonso was so comforted by this act of charity that he gave her a pension. But this woman had a daughter, who resisted all his persuasions, and obstinately refused to forgive the murderer of her brother. His Lordship went to the house twice in order to persuade her. All that he could say was of no avail in vanquishing the hatred of this woman; upon this Alphonso felt constrained to abandon her, and could not forbear from pronouncing the Divine malediction against her.

His solicitude became extreme if the illness of an ecclesiastic were in question, and especially if it were that of an ecclesiastic still in the

prime of life, and in a doubtful state of mind. "Such men stand in need of a special grace, to enable them to repent and resign themselves." When therefore he heard that a priest was in danger of death, he multiplied his visits, until he saw that he was contented and well disposed.

God often deigned to manifest in a miraculous manner what pleasure He had in the visits which the bishop of St. Agatha paid to the bed-sides of those who were ill. He went to comfort Don John Maria Puoti, the brother of the Archbishop of Amalfi by his presence; when he arrived, the mother of the sick man went to meet him with a joyous countenance, and announced to him that Don Joseph Vairo, and Don Francis Dolce, who were celebrated doctors, who had just come from Naples, had held out confident hopes of a speedy recovery. "God grant it may be so," his Lordship replied, "but I pity you his poor mother, and his brothers, by whom he is so much loved. I know that Mgr. d'Amalfi will be too much affected to say mass in the room of the invalid, and to give him communion; but I give Don Anthony, (that was the name of the Archbishop's secretary,) leave to do so instead of his Grace." From seeing Don John Puoti going on so well, every one laughed at these gloomy prognostications; but in the end they were sadly undeceived. The sick man underwent a crisis on the following day, and, contrary to all expectation, passed into the other world. Hortense, the wife of Don Romano, was

ill, and his Lordship went to see her; the servants who came out to meet him begged him to recommend her to God. The malady was not a serious one. However Alphonso said to them, "She will never recover again." Don Romano then came himself, and prayed him to beg God to restore his wife's health. Alphonso exhorted him to conform His will to that of God, who was going to take His servant unto Himself. And, contrary to the expectation of the medical men, the lady died at the end of two days.

Mgr. Albertini was dangerously ill at Caserto, Alphonso went to see him there, and on his arrival he heard that the physicians Vicenzio, Sarago, and Dolce had declared that the prelate was out of danger. He knelt down before an image of the Blessed Virgin, and after a short prayer he arose and said to the doctors, "It is useless to give you more trouble. His Lordship will die." He then entered the sick man's chamber, and took a round-about way of speaking to him, in order not to tell him openly what had been revealed to him. "My Lord," he said to him, "do not trust to the flattering promises of the doctors; if God were to call you to Him, would you not wish to have received the sacraments?" "Undoubtedly I should, my dear friend," answered Mgr. Albertini, who immediately asked to receive the Viaticum and Extreme Unction. Alphonso after this said mass for the happy death of the prelate. One of his relations, the Duchess of Cimitile did not approve of such sad preparations, and the doctors were still more

dissatisfied. However, Alphonso returned to Arienzo; he met the governor of St. Agatha next day at church, and inquired for Mgr. Albertini. "He is better," answered the governor, "at least so Don Andrew Peruto writes me word, and the doctors allowed him to take an egg this morning." After this Alphonso ascended the pulpit, and at the end of his sermon, he said to the people, "Pray for Mgr. of Caserto, who is now in his last agony." He spoke truly, for from the moment he left him he had begun to get worse, and on the following night Mgr. Albertini was no more. It was just the contrary to this in regard to Don Blase Troisi; the doctors had given him over and said that he must die, and the people in his house told the bishop of the state in which the sick man was; for Alphonso knew Don Troisi very well, and he had often borrowed large sums of money from him. He was distressed at hearing such sad tidings, and said mass for the intention of the sick man that very day. He then took a picture of the Blessed Virgin and sent it to him, telling him to recommend himself to the holy Mother of Jesus, and to be sure that he would obtain a cure. The sick man had no sooner received the picture and kissed it, than his state began to amend sensibly, and the improvement went on so rapidly, that he was quite well again in a few days.

Prisoners were as great objects of commiseration to the charitable bishop as the sick. He managed to steal time from his avocations to

visit them frequently, to encourage them, and to incite them to patience. If they were poor, he did not fail to relieve them by his alms. He gave six grains to each of them every Saturday. Don Michael the priest states, that when Alphonso was at Arienzo he received the same for all the prisoners at St. Agatha every Saturday. But as these latter spent what they received in gambling, they ceased to give them money, and the alms were made in provisions. When there were any prisoners for debt, Alphonso interceded for them with their creditors, whose claims he often defrayed with his own money. While he was at Naples, a lady of Durazzano, who was poor, but of a noble family, went to him with tears in her eyes, to tell him that her husband was imprisoned at Sancta Maria d' Agnone, for thirty ducats, which he could not pay. Not having such a large sum at his disposal, he immediately wrote to St. Agatha, to the administrators of the chapels, to obtain some assistance; they sent him twelve ducats, to which he added what was wanting; and thus the afflicted lady was comforted, and the father was restored to his children.

At the opening of one of his pastoral visitations at Arienzo, he told the people how much it was in his heart to relieve all the poor, and that if he could not satisfy all it was not from want of love, but through his own poverty. A man called Marzio Petrillo, on hearing these words, turned to Don Laurence Buggiero, the priest, and said to him jestingly, "We have at last found our prefect," in allusion to a confraternity which was

called in derision of St. Misery. When his Lordship heard this speech he only laughed at it. Some time afterwards he was told that this same Marzio was in prison for debt, and that his family were starving; he then remembered his joke against him, and laughingly said in turn, "He is our fellow-member; we must assist him." He then paid the debt, which amounted to six ducats, and as Petrillo owed a great deal more in other ways, he allowed him ten carlins monthly. A poor creature of Sancta Maria de Vico, called Dominic Carchia, had been in prison for three months for having smuggled salt; being ill besides, he had recourse to Alphonso, who, on the 23rd of February, 1769, wrote to Don Charles Pavone, the royal administrator of salt at the tower of the Annunziata: "I entreat you to release this man from prison, because he is dying of hunger; he has nothing but alms to live on, for he possesses absolutely nothing of his own. I hope that my request may lead you to take pity on this unfortuuate man, and that you will not have the cruelty to let him die in prison. My dear Don Charles, do me this kindness, and I will not fail to recommend you to God." Father Pavone asked him for a medical certificate as a security; his Lordship wrote to him on the 12th of March, in these terms: "I send you the certificate you asked me for, and I hope that it will produce the desired effect, and that in reply I shall hear that this poor old man has been set at liberty. Believe me, my dear Don Charles, you could not do a better deed. I try to assist

this unhappy man by alms, but I cannot remedy his imprisonment; this is why I hope you will kindly give me consolation by releasing him, and spare me the sorrow of hearing that he has died in his mournful prison, and perhaps destitute of spiritual aid."

He even interceded for criminals, and implored the clemency of the barons and judges for them. One Francis Jadevaja, a soldier in a country regiment, being found carrying prohibited arms, was arrested and put in prison. His Lordship pitied the young prisoner, and also his aged father, and lost no time in writing to Don John Baptist Mustillo, the Duke of Maddalon's agent, to beg him to intercede for him with the commissioner in his name. He wrote to the governor of the fortress at St. Agatha to the same effect, and obtained what he desired.

As the great influence he everywhere possessed was well known, people came even from other dioceses to implore his protection; Don Pavone, had resolved to take the farming of the salt of Salerno away from a certain Mark Berjamo, whom he suspected of having wished to cheat him; but he applied to his Lordship. "I assure you," wrote Alphonso to Don Pavone, on the 27th of April, 1765, that this farmer is an honest man, and if he has not satisfied you, it has not been his fault. I therefore earnestly entreat you to leave this man in his farm, and to treat him with all the charity with which your good heart is filled: I shall always be grateful to you for what you will deign to do in his favour."

Compassion often ceases when one has to exercise it at one's own expense, but that of Alphonso was also admirable for its disinterestedness. His Lordship's servants were uneasy, not without a cause, at seeing his store of apples visibly diminish, and they could not make out how it happened, as Alexis the attendant carried the key of the chest about with him. A canon had suspicions about a person who frequented the palace, and went to his house, accompanied by Alexis the attendant, and by the commissioner, and there found the missing apples, and an iron instrument by means of which the theft had been committed. The magistrate was informed of it, and the thief was put in prison. The canon and the attendant hastened to carry the news to Alphonso, expecting to receive praises for their zeal. But as soon as he heard that the culprit was arrested, he was disturbed, and reproved the servant for having taken such a step. "What!" he said, "imprison a poor creature for a few apples; go to the magistrate directly, and get him to set him at liberty; and as to the apples I will buy them." "The apples are your own," replied the attendant. "Well," answered Alphonso, "do not trouble yourself about that, and make haste and deliver this unfortunate man." Meanwhile, the grand-vicar and several gentlemen came in, and they all told his Lordship that he ought to make an example of the delinquent. Alphonso yielded through prudence, but he immediately wrote to the ma-

gistrate to stop all proceedings, and to send him the iron which had been the instrument whereby the offence was committed. He sent food to the prisoner morning and evening, and treated the guards and the gaoler to cause them to treat the poor man well; and as soon as he was set at liberty, he sent for him, remonstrated with him, and gave him a large alms. As even mass was not said for the numerous prisoners who were confined at Arienzo, where the country courts also send their prisoners, Alphonso managed to get the Duke of Maddalon to allow a chapel to be erected for them.

Alphonso was especially interested in the fate of prisoners, whose only crime is often that of having been calumniated. A gentleman was arrested and imprisoned on some false accusation or other, I do not know what. The magistrate was engaged in drawing up an action against him, when his Lordship, who was convinced of his inocence, sent his secretary to him to beg him to suspend the proceedlngs. As the magistrate relied on the report of a man whom Alphonso called a calumniator, he was offended at his request, and dismissed the secretary with a very bad grace. His Lordship immediately stated the case to Don Philip Caraffa, the Count of Cerreto, and the governor of the Duke of Maddalon. He received the following answer, which it gives me pleasure to quote at length: "On your Lordship's recommendation in favour of N., I hastened to write to the

magistrate of whom you spoke to me, to order him immediately to release the gentleman and to destroy all the proceedings which might have been entered into in consequence of the denunciation against him. I also forbid him to receive money or any other present from the poor gentleman, and I have strenuously advised him not to receive such reports for the future, in spite of the contrary affirmations of respectable persons. I have thus satisfied your Lordship's wishes; I hope that you will always rely upon my services; I commend myself to your prayers, and kiss your hands," &c.

The constables met with a man at Arienzo who was a dealer in tobacco, and arrested him to examine if it were not the produce of fraud. As this was probably the case, the man made away with it, not seeing any other means of escape. The constables were irritated at having missed their aim; they bastinadoed him, and wanted to put him in prison. The poor man took refuge in a church; upon this the custom-house officers got still more exasperated, tore him away from the holy spot, and dragged him to prison. When his Lordship heard of it, he immediately sent for the gaoler, and demanded that the prisoner should be set free. He then turned to his grand-vicar and ordered him to write out the statement of all that had passed, and he added, "Our immunities are in question: if I had to sell my mitre, I would do so to obtain justice." He was not at rest until the prisoner was released.

A poor woman of Arienzo, called Grace Constance, was seized when carrying a pound of tobacco, which she wanted to introduce in a fraudulent manner, and she was immediately put in prison. His Lordship was sorry for it, and wrote to Naples, to the Marquis of Granito, the director of the custom-house, who directly sent an order to the commissioner residing at Maddalon for this woman to be set at liberty.

As his Lordship thought that a bishop is especially bound to be merciful towards all, there was no one in distress whatsoever who sought his protection in vain. A chanter belonging to the cathedral became an accomplice in a homicide, and he was put in prison; but as the evidence was not sufficient, he was set at liberty. As he could not however justify himself from having taken some part in the murder, he was suspended. He was very poor: when Alphonso saw his misery, he interceded for him with the treasurers to beg that they would grant him the half of what he would have gained by his presence in the choir. "What you do for this poor creature, I shall feel as if done to myself." Touched by this request, they went still further; they gave the unhappy man the whole of his wages. He did not prove ungrateful; he immediately went to thank his bishop in the most lively terms, and the prelate, who still sorrowed over his position, took the opinion of enlightened persons to know if he could not reinstate him. "It pains me to see him in this situation," he said; "he is

poor and knows not how to get a livelihood." He sent him to Rome with a statement of the matter, and at his own expense; but as the case could not be cleared up, his Lordship assisted the chanter and his parents by allowing him a pension.

Let us cite another instance of Alphonso's charity. Five Albanian soldiers who deserted at the bridge of the Magdalene, had the rashness to turn their arms against the officers who were sent in pursuit of them. Two were killed in the mountains of Arienzo, and the three others took refuge in a little country church. The suit was got ready, and application was made to his Lordship to decide if they might or might not enjoy the privilege of sanctuary. They could not; but as his Lordship was in horror at the idea of staining his hands with the blood of these unhappy men, he let the allotted month pass without pronouncing any decision, so that the matter might be left to the mixed court, from which he expected a more favourable decision. However, an officer of justice came from Naples for the papers relating to the trial; but on seeing that Alphonso's decision was not there, he said to him, "My Lord, your pity injures the culprits; for now that the mixed court must decide their case, they will assuredly be condemned to death." At these words Alphonso became much concerned, and immediately sent for Don Francis Dupins, an officer of the regiment at Aversa, who was quartered with a company at Arienzo,

and asked him what he could do for these unfortunate men. "Nothing but your intercession can save them," answered Dupins. Immediately, that is to say at six o'clock in the evening, Alphonso despatched a courier to General Prince Jaci, to the Marquis of Tanucci and of Marco, as well as to Don Anthony del Rio, secretary of war, to ask for the pardon of these criminals, saying that if he were not assured of their safety, his own life would be endangered, for, that although paralytic as he was, he would then go in person and throw himself at the feet of the king. Alphonso obtained more than he had asked; the deserters received a full and entire pardon, and all three, by order of the colonel, accompanied by an officer of justice, came to thank their deliverer. On seeing them he was filled with joy; he remonstrated with them in a paternal manner, and showed that not satisfied with having saved their lives, he also wished to save their souls.

CHAPTER LXVI.

Hospitality is included by St. Paul among the duties of a bishop, and Alphonso was also remarkable for that virtue, indeed his palace was like a hotel, for it was always open. If any one of his clergy arrived at the palace in the evening, even if he were the lowest of all, he was sure to find a lodging there. All strange ecclesias-

tics, and especially the candidates for holy orders, who had no acquaintances in St. Agatha or at Arienzo, were also invited to dinner; if they came from a distant place, he made them pass the night at the palace: and it was the same in regard to the agents of the priests who daily came in great numbers to see him. When there was a meeting for the election of a living, he used to make the examiners dine at his table as well as the candidates. "At dinner," he said to Tramontana the priest, "I am obliged to give and to take of what I destine for the poor, for it does not do to send any of these priests to an inn."

Whenever he sent for a religious from Naples or for one of us, to give the spiritual exercises to the nuns of Arienzo, he caused him to lodge and feed at his own palace, in order that the nuns might be at no expense. Even when Don Paschal Bartolini came from Airola to hear their confessions, he lodged with his Lordship. During the first period of his residence at St. Agatha, the archpriest of Durazzano came to see him at the dinner hour, accompanied by two ecclesiastics. The archpriest was ignorant of his Lordship's way of acting, and begged him to receive him into the palace. "By all means," said Alphonso; and as the two companions of the archpriest were getting up to go to the hotel, he caused them to stay, also telling them that the house of a bishop is at the service of all, and particularly of priests.

Don Salvadore Tramontana, who did nothing

without consulting him, very often went to Naples to visit him; he never arrived without bringing either fruits or some cake, but his Lordship perceived his delicacy and wanted him to dispense with it. "When you come here," he said to him, "do not trouble yourself about anything. The bishop is bound to be hospitable." Another time he wrote to him, "If you will come here for four days, I shall be glad, but let it be without thinking of paying me for the little bread you may eat; remember that I lodge a great many other people who serve me all day."

Alphonso, who changed the regulation of his table in some little degree for persons of distinction, one day received a visit from Don Dominic Spota, the grand-chanter of the cathedral at Girgenti. As he noticed that the table was well supplied, he laughed and said to his Lordship, "How does this sumptuousness agree with your poverty?" "Hospitality," answered Alphonso, "is the daughter of charity and not of poverty." However, this sumptuousness only consisted in an extra dish: this was how he treated the Duchesses of Bovino and of Salandro, and other ladies and gentlemen who came to consult him, not excepting his brother Don Hercules, even on his first visit after his second marriage. On that day, as the nuns were informed of the arrival of his brother and his bride, they sent some delicacies to the palace, addressed to Don Hercules. When his Lordship saw them on the table, he sent for Brother Francis Anthony, to ascertain if these dishes really came from without.

In Alphonso's time the episcopal palace was also turned into a public hospital. When any traveller fell ill, he did not apply to the Benfratelli Fathers, who are at St. Agatha, nor to the hospital at Arienzo, but they appealed to the charity of his Lordship. A hermit of the church of St. Nicholas of Ischia, who had come to ask his advice, got ill. As soon as Alphonso heard of it, he charitably received him into the palace, he often visited him, he paid the doctors and their remedies, and he did not let him go away for a month, when he was entirely recovered. Mgrs. Borgia and Pallante once came to speak to him, when their coachman fell ill. Alphonso immediately gave him a bed and a room. The illness became serious; the last sacraments were administered to him, and Alphonso did not fail to console him frequently by his own presence. The son of the coachman hastened from Naples, and was also received with the greatest kindness by his Lordship. When the father was convalescent, Alphonso caused him to get light food, and treated him with the greatest attention. The father and the son remained in the palace for upwards of a month.

The pilgrims who applied to him received provisions for their journey, besides being lodged at the palace. Our Father Carado met with a Calvinist once, who had abjured his errors, and their conversation turned upon Alphonso. "What a good bishop Mgr. Liguori is!" said the convert; "he kept me at his house for three days with the greatest charity."

When Alphonso left Nocera for St. Agatha, he told us that we should always meet with a welcome at his house, adding that he should treat us as religious should be treated. "You will not lack straw beds," said he, "nor a poor and frugal table." In fact, he treated all the members of his congregation just as he did strangers, and gave them just the same kind of food. Although he liked to see any of us, he did not allow of any lengthened stay without there was a necessity for it, and when the business in question was terminated, he kindly dismissed whoever it might be.

Although Alphonso was so careful in fulfilling the duty of hospitality, and exercised it towards all kinds of persons, yet there were some people who were envious of his good reputation, and who criticised him even on this score. To speak plainly, they would perhaps have liked to see a splendid table at the bishop's house, that they might have had good cheer and amusement there. When Tramontana the priest informed him of these murmurs against him, Alphonso could not help being astonished. "They say that I do not practise hospitality properly!" he wrote to him; "I know however how much it costs me; as Arienzo is a town through which a great many people pass, my palace is almost always full of strangers, for whom I always keep several beds prepared, and the guests are sometimes so numerous that I am obliged to borrow beds."

Alphonso, who was only economical in order to be liberal, was also admirable in his detach-

ment from all self-interest. Even in his own family he detested the shadow of that cupidity which the apostle anathematises so severely.

From the time of his arrival at St. Agatha he regulated all the fees of the episcopal court according to the customs at Benevento, which considerably lessened the tax on a great many registrations. As to those relating to ordinations, he wished them to be gratuitous. These reductions were complained of, especially by the secretary, but his Lordship replied to him, "I sacrifice what accrued to me; you can take what is your due."

This disinterestedness lessened the revenues of the bishopric one-half. See what he wrote to Father Villani on the 25th of September, 1763: "As to the revenues of my bishopric, which are said to amount to four thousand ducats, I should be thankful if I had two thousand two hundred! I have retrenched many of the sums which I formerly received, but which I felt scrupulous about, and I think with reason. I have greatly reduced my income, because I consider it a very good kind of alms to abandon the fees on marriages, especially when there is poverty or danger in the case. I hope to be certainly able to cover all the debts this year, but the scarcity may perhaps prevent my doing so until next year."

If a more just idea of all the sacrifices made by our saintly bishop is wished for, let us listen to several authentic testimonies. According to Archdeacon Rainone, he often abandoned the whole of his fees. He himself wrote to one of his friends, saying, "I often remit considerable

sums, and those who serve me know what horror I feel in violently exacting the payment of what is due to me." Don Dominic Ruggiero the priest, attests that in all his ordinations he obtained a release from the charitable bishop of all that he would have had to disburse; and even when he received his living, he was only allowed to pay his respects. "He generously abandoned all that was due to him for the patents for livings," also said Don Michael Izzo, "and he would not even receive thanks for it. He only allowed of the grand-vicar and the secretary to receive what was strictly due to them, with some small present to the servants." He also declined receiving anything for ordinations, saying, "That which was given to me gratuitously, ought also to be given by me for nothing." He also evinced the same generosity, when the clothing or profession of nuns was in question. "I can demand nothing for these things," said he, "since nothing has been fixed on this head by Pope Innocent III."

He readily dispensed with marriage fees. When he resigned the episcopate, the canon Don Pascal Lesso examined the archives of the church at Arpaja, and said that he did not find a single marriage celebrated for nothing by the preceding bishops, while in Mgr. Liguori there were a great many, especially among the poor.

When Alphonso became bishop, the diocese of St. Agatha numbered sixty-four very rich chapels as we have seen, of which the adminis-

trators were each bound to pay him four ducats at the principal solemnity. But canon Veparelli asserts that his Lordship generally left this sum in their hands for the poor. He even appointed a canon as an advocate in favour of these latter, who was bound to defend them gratuitously in case of need.

Formerly gifts formed a large part of the income of the bishopric of St. Agatha, for the inhabitants of this town and of the whole diocese were distinguished for being very generous towards their pastor; but Alphonso would not receive any other present than the dust from the feet of the poor; he knew that a bishop ought to nourish the poor, and not impoverish them. When the treasurer Don Lucas Cacciapuoti was appointed dean of the cathedral, he sent a present to the bishop, who refused it. The dean gently complained of it, and received this answer: "I have only done my duty in making you dean, and no recompense ought to be expected or received for doing what one ought to do."

One day in spring he wished to have some of the fruits of this season, and knowing that the priest Don Francis Ferrara had a quantity of melons, he sent to buy four from him. The priest hastened to send him a dozen. When Alphonso saw them, he asked what they cost; the porter replied that it was a present. Alphonso immediately sent them back. The priest then came in person to see him, and assured him that these melons cost him nothing. It

was quite a contest, in which the priest got the victory however; as he was set upon it Alphonso yielded in order not to pain him; but he did it with so much regret that he took care in future never to ask for anything of the sort from this priest or any other.

I cannot help citing another instance of the same sort. A canon knowing that his Lordship required ripe fruit, on account of his sedentary life, made him a present of three melons; Alphonso positively determined that they should either be paid for, or that they should be sent back again. But the canon, in order to get out of the difficulty, told him what they cost him, and said that he left that sum in his hands for the poor. This arrangement pleased Alphonso.

He also showed the greatest disinterestedness in the farming of the property of the bishopric. According to the grand-vicar Rubini's testimony, he only sought equity, and was most careful that the farmers should not be induced to make bargains injurious to their own interests. He carried his disinterestedness still further; whatever conditions the farmers might have entered into, it sufficed for them to expose their distress and the hardness of the times, to insure their being released from a good part of their rents, especially if they were men who feared God. A great number of these debtors obtained very great reductions on considerable arrears, and this is shown by an examination of the books containing the accounts of the bishopric. These details are given to us by Canon

Viparelli. One of the farmers complained to his Lordship one day of the bad harvest, in presence of our Father Buonopane, who relates the fact. "Alphonso at once released him," said he, "from more than two hundred ducats of what he owed him."

Tollo Jadevaja, a very upright man, and a husbandman of the mense, represented to the bishop in 1768, that the year had been one of scarcity, and the priest Don Francis Jadevaja, the son of the farmer, attests that his father was released from paying upwards of a hundred ducats. "In a word," said the grand-vicar Rubini, "he made so many such discounts, that he never had a farmer who paid the full amount of his lease."

His Lordship dismissed a woman from a house belonging to him, whom he had been led to suspect of bad character through false reports. The poor woman began a novena to St. Joseph, and went to Arienzo. When she was ushered into his Lordship's presence, he asked her to what saint she was most devoted. "To St. Joseph," she answered. "Ah well," said his Lordship to her, for he had been previously undeceived, "St. Joseph has been gracious to you, and has told me not to turn you out." The woman was encouraged by this good beginning, and then said, that the rent of the farm was very high; Alphonso was touched by her poverty, and asked her how much she wished to pay him. Her rent amounted to twenty-seven ducats; she offered him one-and-twenty.

His Lordship agreed to this, and she continued to pay the same sum during the whole time he was bishop; but after his time the woman had to pay thirty-one ducats, instead of twenty-one.

Brother Francis Anthony, and Alexis the servant, relate that on discharging a steward who had a deficit of about four hundred ducats, his Lordship on seeing him shedding tears and confessing his negligence, was satisfied, and sent him away in peace. Several people said that he ought to bring him to justice: "What do you say about courts of justice?" said Alphonso with emotion, "this man has satisfied justice by confessing his fault. What a thing it would be to see a bishop bring an unfortunate man to justice, to ruin him outright, for the sake of his own interests!" When he nominated Don Virgil Cimino as his secretary, the grand-vicar thought that as he was of the diocese, he might give him only four ducats a month, instead of the ordinary sum of six: "Why be parsimonious?" replied his Lordship. "Don Virgil is poor, why deprive him of anything? let him receive what has been given before." When Christmas came, Alphonso feared that the grand-vicar would not give the accustomed Christmas-box to Brother Francis Anthony, so he sent for him and gave him the twenty carlins as usual. His scrupulousness as to paying the wages of all the workmen was even still greater. Anthony Viscardi made him a scapular, and mended his small-clothes; Alphonso ordered him to be paid

immediately. The tailor began to laugh, because the things were not worth the trouble; but as his Lordship insisted on it, Viscardi said to him, "Am I not free, and can I not make you a present? Give me your blessing and I shall be paid." Alphonso was silent, but he was dissatisfied at it. To give a final proof which is most striking and touching. "I am an old man of ninety," said Father Raphael de Ruvo, the treasurer of St. Peter of Alcantara, to me, "and yet I never saw a prelate so charitable and disinterested as Mgr. Liguori. His purse was always open to give, and only closed against receiving. Everything was gratis for others, but he doubly paid what he himself owed." Alphonso knew the duty of disinterestedness so well, that when Mgr. Rossi who succeeded him came to visit him after his resignation, Alphonso said to him, "My Lord, if you wish to do good and to succeed at St. Agatha, dispose of your own purse, but never of that of others."

Though Alphonso's disinterestedness was so great, it did not go so far as to injure his successors, for he knew how to distinguish between his own individual interests and those of the episcopal revenue. His vigilance on this point was extreme. When he arrived at St. Agatha, he saw that every priest or rector, even those of the monasteries, presented him with four capons; believing that this was a spontaneous present, he did not wish to receive it. When Archdeacon Rainone heard of this, he immediately

brought the deeds which proved that this gift was not optional but a part of the revenues of the episcopate. Alphonso then not only received the capons, but even exacted them for the future, and in order to make a capital out of them, he applied to the poulterer each time, in order to know the price, and said to those around him jestingly, "This is a dish for the poor; it is not one for us who are people of no consequence."

One day Don Pascal Deodatus, the priest of Bucciano said to his Lordship, "I do not know what has given rise to this tribute of fowls." Alphonso, who suspected that he was not over well inclined to send them to him, answered, "It is a certain rental, and I cannot do anything to injure my successors." "Would it not be better," continued Don Pascal, "for the priest to give it as an alms to the poor?" His Lordship saw through the mystery: "It is I who have to give alms," he replied; "and if you wish to do better, send me the money and keep the capons." The archpriests, priest, rectors, and superiors of monasteries, renewed their protestation of obedience on the Assumption, and according to old custom, they then brought the bishop a present as a testimony of their submission; and the bishop had to invite them to his table on this same day. Alphonso's predecessors had abolished the dinner and substituted a large pecuniary sum instead of the present, without caring about receiving the accustomed homage; when Alphonso heard of this, he required that they should discharge the promise of obedience,

and that in place of the prescribed sum, each one should make him some little present.

The steward of the revenues demanded that the archpriest of Durazzano should give to the bishop the fifteen measures of corn due according to the terms of the ancient quit-rent; he replied that he was not bound to do so, since the payment of tithes had been forbidden. "I am surprised," wrote Alphonso on the 26th of August 1773, "that your Reverence can thus forget your obligations after having taken an oath to defend the rights of the Church. Is it from the fear of its costing you a few carlins, or in order to avoid paying the tribute for the income? If mild measures are not enough to make you pay what you owe, we will have recourse to the tribunals, because I am determined to receive the tribute which is due to me at any price." On receiving in answer to this, that the syndic of Arienzo had also forbidden his paying the accustomed tithes, he hastened to write to all his priests on the 28th of August, 1773, to tell them to repair to Naples and to state their rights before the royal council, adding, that if the syndic or others prevented justice being rendered, he would in that event himself undertake to defend the common law. He felt bound in conscience to do so. Meanwhile, he advised them to make the counsellor feel that he ought to render justice to the side which was in the right.

In spite of his representations, the archpriest of Durazzano would not have recourse to Naples to defend his rights, nor would he pay the rental

in question to the mense. Alphonso then felt obliged to denounce him to the metropolitan of Benevento; but the judgment remained undecided, as his Lordship gave in his resignation meanwhile. However, in order not to neglect the interests of the mense, when Mgr. Rossi arrived at St. Agatha, he informed him of the reasons which proved his claims. He therefore wrote a letter to him on the 27th June, 1779, in which he says, "The Archpriest asserts that he owes nothing to the mense; but the fact is, that there is not a doubt that he is its debtor. I have taken just steps in the matter with the court of justice at Benevento, but as my resignation of the bishopric was accepted, I have not been able to terminate the affair. The sum amounts to thirty ducats a year, and I do not see why the poor revenue should be deprived of it."

The episcopal income had been lessened by the contribution of wood furnished to the troops quartered at St. Agatha. As Alphonso was not able to obtain any compensation for this he appealed to the royal court: he alleged strong reasons in his favour; and the ministers, who were moved by their respect for his person, rejected the claims of the parish. "That which is taken from Mgr. Liguori," they said, "is taken from the poor."

These measures were very painful to Alphonso, and he only determined to resort to them through necessity; he was quite opposed to law-suits, and if he proceeded against the archpriest of

whom we have spoken, it was because he felt bound to do so in conscience. "O how many things," Archdeacon Rainone wrote to me, "his Lordship brought to a happy end through gentle means! When any difficulty arose which gave ground for a law-suit, he tried to avoid it, saying, that a bad accommodation is better than a good law-suit." What did he not do in order to bring about an amicable understanding with this archpriest? He wrote to ask him to come and have an interview with him, and as he did not even deign to answer him, Alphonso again wrote to him and humbly said, "If I had a carriage, I would have sent it for you long ago; come, I entreat you." It was only after he found that these advances were useless that Alphonso at length resolved to attack him.

A dispute arose between his Lordship and the Duke of Maddalon on the subject of the right of pasturage and lordship over the fief of Bagnoli which belonged to the mense, and as these rights had been refused for two years, Alphonso defended himself with apostolical courage. "I am obliged," he wrote to the Duke's agent, Don Andrew Mustillo, on the 30th of October, 1765, "to defend the property of the mense, which possesses the double right of pasturage and lordship; I beg you to tell the officers of the Duke not to act with violence, because I will only yield to evident reasons for so doing, for I am bound in conscience to defend the mense. If I am pushed to extremities, I will apply directly to the regency, by

whom I hope to be heard." In another letter of the 13th of January, 1766, he says, "If I could reconcile it to my conscience, I would yield and say no more about this affair. God knows what a horror I have for law-suits; the very name makes me tremble; but how can I yield, after having taken an oath to defend the rights of my church?" On the 14th of the following January, he addressed the Count of Cerreto, the young Duke's governor, on the same subject: "I am sorry for it," he wrote to him, "but it is my conscience which disturbs me; but for that I would not say another word, in order not to be troublesome to your Excellency." The affair however ended to the advantage of Alphonso, thanks to his prudence. The Count had a great veneration for the saintly bishop, and he, not to be outdone in civility, placed the case in the hands of one of the Duke's advocates. The count was satisfied at such a generous proceeding, and wrote to tell his agent, Don Mustillo, to observe the ancient custom and to pay up the arrears. It was a beautiful sight to see interest and disinterestedness thus struggling together in his Lordship, or rather to see his justice contending with his charity.

A poor gentleman, and one burthened with a numerous family, owed the mense about twelve ducats for quit-rent. As he was summoned by the steward, he implored the assistance of the widow Donna Catherine Lucca, who was intimate with Alphonso, and who was also a lady in advanced age, and full of the fear of God. She

no sooner told his Lordship of the state in which the gentleman was, than he forgave him the debt of twelve ducats. Alphonso then reflected on the difficulties in which he was placed, and added, "What shall be done for this man?" and he assigned him a measure of corn every month. Nevertheless, in order to prevent the right as to the rent from being injured, he caused the steward to oblige the debtor to appear every year in order to pay it, and then Alphonso left him the money under the title of an alms. He thus preserved all the rights of the mense uninjured, and was in the habit of satisfying the claims of charity at his own private expense alone.

From the moment he came to St. Agatha and saw that the bishopric possessed a good deal of property, he took all possible care to prevent its being depreciated in value. Where olive trees were wanting, he caused them to be replanted; he every year had the dead trees replaced; and when any of the ground was uncultivated, he had its value increased by plantations. As one wing of the palace was in a bad state, he immediately sent for two architects from Naples, to prevent any further injury arising by suitable repairs; this cost him more than six hundred ducats. A house belonging to the mense having also got out of repair, the tenant, a man named Stasi, did not want to do anything to it, but his Lordship insisted on it, from the fear that the annual quit-rent would not suffice for what was wanting. "I feel scrupulous about it," he wrote to the canon Petti, "and I

wish to do all that is necessary in order to repair this house thoroughly rather than diminish the ground-rent."

He not only took care that the value of the property did not become lessened; he even sought to make it still more valuable. As he knew that the manufacture of silk was much sought after, and that a great quantity of mulberry trees were needed for that purpose, he wished to have a number of plants of these trees, and even inquired as to whether white mulberry trees were more profitable than black ones.

CHAPTER LXVII.

Virtues never go alone: in proportion to Alphonso's charity was also that of his love of poverty; and as he aimed at imitating Jesus Christ in all things, he also endeavoured to resemble Him in His detachment from this world's goods. When he was raised to the episcopate, with the exception of one violet suit, he only made use of Bishop Danza's old clothes, and they were the only ones which he wore during the thirteen years he was bishop at St. Agatha. With the exception of the episcopal vestments which he made use of when he had to officiate, he always wore the habit of his congregation, which became dearer to him and more to his taste, from its appearing humble

and poor; and even this cassock had no fellow. "He actually had no other clothes than those on his back," said Rubini the grand-vicar, "and they were old and patched." One day when Don John Baptist Puoti went to see him, he found him clothed in violet, and believing that he must therefore be going out, he said to him, "Are you going to celebrate any function?" No," replied his Lordship, "but my cassock is being mended." He once passed the monastery of the Dominican fathers of Durazzano, dressed in an old gown full of patches, and in a cassock which was out at the elbows; on seeing him in this state, Father Eanti took compassion on such great poverty. His Lordship excused himself for it by frankly saying that he had given a commission for four articles of clothing to be bought for him at Naples at the old-clothes shop, but that they had not yet arrived.

He had a cassock which was so bad that the lay-brother who accompanied him was ashamed of it; as he had not the courage to tell him so, he took it into his head to take it away from him during the night, and to make a new one of the same kind; the next morning while he was assisting him to dress, which Alphonso could not do alone on account of an issue in his arm, the brother adroitly substituted the new habit. His Lordship did not find it out at first, but on looking at the sleeves, he saw that they were new. "Ah!" he said to him, "you have put new sleeves?" "Yes," answered the brother,

"the others were too much torn." His Lordship said no more, but some time afterwards he saw that it was not his old cassock at all. "I am master," said he, raising his voice, "I think this cassock is perfectly new." "So it is," replied the brother, "the other was no longer decent enough for you to put on." "Never mind," answered his Lordship in a tone of authority, "go and fetch me the old cassock." "If you will not have this one," said the brother to him, "you must do without any, for the other has been given to the poor." His Lordship could not help regretting it, and said to the brother, "You always will act of your own accord." His underclothes were of coarse stuff, according to the grand-vicar Rubini; in summer they were of common cloth dyed black. Anthony Viscardi says, that on receiving a pair of small-clothes to mend, he did not know where to put the needle, and that a beggar would not have taken them. His under-garments were of common cloth. "Although sick and old," said Don Thomas Aceto the priest; "he only used hemp shirts, and a wooden rosary was suspended at his neck, similar to those which poor beggars use." The wife of the servant Alexis, who generally washed his Lordship's linen, often complained to Father Telesca, that the shirts were so tattered that the pieces remained in her hands; she therefore wished his Lordship to be persuaded to get four new ones. "I undertook the office," said this father to me, "and seizing on a good opportunity, which seeing the rents in the collar

of his shirt gave me, I told him that he ought to get new ones." "Old things," he replied with a smile, "suit an old bishop; and then I ought to think of clothing the poor."

Our father Angelo Gaudino, in going to Arienzo, once met with a countryman on the way, who told him some admirable things in regard to his Lordship. Amongst others he related to him how he went to pay visits, mounted on an ass, and sometimes with such tattered clothes on that his hair-shirt was seen through them. His stockings were of coarse wool; when he officiated he wore spun-silk ones, but he never would make use of real silk stockings. The shoes which he had made on his election were the only ones he wore during the thirteen years he governed St. Agatha, and he still wore them after his resignation, when he returned to Nocera until his death. The stick which he used for the sole purpose of supporting him was of no value, at most having cost twenty carlins. The little silken twist upon it got so shabby, that it looked quite discreditable. Don John Manco could not bear such great poverty of appearance, and substituted a simple riband in its stead; when his Lordship perceived it, he said in great alarm, "What is this riband for?" He was told that it was the work of Don John Manco the priest. "Yes!" said he, "it could only have been done by him." The watch which he used had been bought at Rome by Father Villani for sixteen crowns.

His bed was of wood, of coarse workmanship;

he never would make use of iron ones, notwithstanding the representations which were made to him as to the inconveniences of wooden beds. He had no curtains, the sheets were of coarse linen; his blanket in winter was one of coarse wool, like those which the poor use, it was also old and worn out, and however severe the cold might be, he never allowed another to be bought, nor would he have a counterpane, but was satisfied with spreading his cloak and his cassock on the bed.

Don Dominic Spota, who was grand-chanter of the cathedral of Girgenti, and several times vicar capitular, went to visit him at Arienzo, and gave the following details in a letter which he wrote to Father Blasucci: "I have admired Naples, I have felt admiration for the magnificence of Rome, but the life of Mgr. Liguori has made a much greater impression on me; it has effaced all the beauties of these two capitals from my eyes. I have seen a saintly bishop of primitive ages; he lies on a bed to which he is confined by the most painful infirmities, but his serene countenance betokens the tranquillity of his soul. The glory of God, and the government of his diocese, occupy him unceasingly; in him have I seen extreme moderation in sleep and in food, and such absolute poverty in all things, that the only blanket he has on his straw bed is his cassock; his pastoral ring would not excite the envy of a beggar, a false stone is its only ornament; his cross equals it in its simplicity."

At St. Agatha as well as at Arienzo he always chose the smallest room in an obscure recess for himself. He had not one valuable chair; those he had were the kind which are sold by the dozen, and which all the poor use, and which do not exceed from thirteen to fifteen grains in price.

Mgr. Albertini, the Bishop of Caserto, went to visit him accompanied by his suite, and found that Alphonso had not enough chairs for all the guests. The Bishop of Caserto spoke in gentle pleasantry on the simplicity of the furniture, which amused Alphonso and all who were present. His table was of unpolished wood, and its value consisted in its antiquity. He did not make use of an inkstand of silver or brass; a miserable little inkstand of bone sufficed for him; even the paper which he used for everything he wrote was very common, and he was so careful in turning the least morsel to advantage, that he used the envelopes of letters for his compositions and in writing to us. His snuff-box was the same which he had had in the congregation, that is to say, it was a wooden snuff-box, worth only a few grains. There were no chests of drawers in his chamber, and furthermore he had nothing to put in them; the bare floor served as his Prie-dieu; in a word, he used nothing which was not very poor and very coarse. He once asked Father Villani for the Proper for the Office of the Holy Redeemer, he sent him one in very elegant binding. "I have received Calmet," he wrote to him, "as well as the

Office of the Holy Redeemer, which is bound as if it were for a prince." Mgr. Albertini was in a state of admiration at seeing such great poverty; he exclaimed, "If we were to act as he does, we should breathe forth everywhere the odour of sanctity. Everything about Mgr. Liguori commands respect, veneration, and homage." The only ornaments which adorned his rooms, besides his books, were a large crucifix which Father Stephen Longobardi of the Congregation of the Pious Workmen gave him, and which he had always before him, and a little picture of our Lady of Good Counsel, which was placed on his table.

All the other rooms in the palace also betokened poverty. Mgr. Danza left handsome furniture, but Alphonso did not make use of it, and the palace was a real mirror of evangelical poverty. With the exception of some common beds for those who might come to see him, of some chairs, and deal tables, all the rest evinced distress. There were no valuable pictures, but on all sides devotional pictures of Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin were to be seen. Even on the staircase one saw Calvaries; in the vestibule of the house at Arienzo he placed a cross which he kissed every time he went in or out of the house.

His guests had also to share in this poverty; however noble they might be, they had to rest satisfied with what was destined for every one; there was no special apartment reserved for them. The best piece of furniture for the use

of any one of distinction, was a bed which was newly covered with some old damask cloth which had belonged to Mgr. Danza; and this was called the bed of state. He detested valets de chambres, and condemned them in a bishop's house. He dressed and undressed himself. Before he got into bed, he put out the light himself, and if he had a lay-brother with him, it was in order that he might assist him in writing and in keeping the house in order.

We have seen that Alphonso's episcopal emblems were in keeping with this poverty. The little cross which he was in the habit of wearing was of gilded brass; that which he used for episcopal functions was of silver gilt, adorned with false stones; even his pastoral ring was not of gold, but Alexis the attendant got it into his hands to have a stone reset in it, and exchanged it for a gold ring without his master ever perceiving it. One morning when he was on the point of going to officiate pontifically, his ring could not be found; Don Michael Volpicelli, a gentleman of Sarno, who was present, was distressed about it; it was found however, and at dinner the gentleman could not help expressing what sorrow he had felt. His Lordship smiled. "If it was the stone which has made you uneasy," said he, "it is not an emerald, but a piece of glass, for my uncle's ring, which was given to me by Mgr. Graimini, was sold for the relief of a number of poor." On another occasion, when the members of his household were joking about the value of his

ring, his Lordship said to them, "Such as it is, it has figured at Rome, and every one looked upon it as a precious thing; but you do not know, said I to myself, that I broke my best decanter to adorn it."

Alphonso had such an ardent love for holy poverty, that even the shadow of gold or silver made him afraid. I will give an instance in proof of this. Father Mascia of Naples, the ex-provincial of the Capuchins, came to Arienzo, and Alphonso often went to his room to see him, and each time he never omitted tenderly to kiss a beautiful parchment picture representing the *Ecce Homo*. Father Mascia, on observing this devotion, offered the pitcture to Alphonso, who accepted it. It was bound by the cloth of which the Capuchins make use. It appeared a superfluous ornament to our saint; he wanted to take it off, but the cloth concealed a little silver frame. Alphonso immediately sought for some pretext for returning the picture, and said that he would not deprive Father Mascia of this object of devotion, but after he left the house he said to Don Felix Verzalla, his secretary, "The picture was very beautiful, it is a pity that it has that silver frame."

The poverty which existed in his house in respect to the quality of the things used in it, was truly edifying. On the pretext of health, he would only use the commonest sort of bread, which is called third bread at Arienzo, and is made of bran with a very small quantity of flour. All the dishes were equally common, and he

was satisfied with what was to be found in the town. He never ate any meat but veal or mutton; there is no other to be met with at Arienzo. It was a culpable thing in his eyes to send for meat, or wine, or fish, to a distance. "What scandal would it give," he said, "if the people saw me faring daintily!" Even when he was ill, he would not allow anything to be sent for to Naples or elsewhere. "I ought to use the produce of my own diocese," said he. And among the things which were sold in the place, he wished those which were the cheapest to be selected. The secretary one day bought a rare fish; as soon as Alphonso saw it, he hastened to send it back again: "Let it not be said," he exclaimed in alarm, "that the bishop eats the best fish." If any sort of delicacy were prepared for him during his illnesses, he said, shaking his head, "I am satisfied with what the others have, I do not wish for anything in particular." He either ate nothing, or scarcely touched what had been prepared for him. As he did not receive presents, he was obliged to buy everything, and as his poverty did not admit of his laying in provisions, he was obliged to live from day to day; he once was even destitute of the necessary quantity of bread. The bishops, princes, and lords who visited him, did not make him change the regulation of his table in the least degree. "All that is superfluous is taken from the poor," said he. He did not even omit the lecture for the sake of his noble guests. "These sort of things,"

said he, "are the sweet spices which preserve and perfume the table of a bishop."

When he had to receive a visit from Mgr. Puoti, the Archbishop of Amalfi, whom he had sent for to consecrate his cathedral, Alphonso ordered two more dishes than usual to be prepared. The cook, who had been in the service of other prelates, thought that the archbishop's visit would be an occasion by which he could get credit through a grand feast; but when he heard such a poor repast ordered, he crossly replied, "My Lord, the scullion could prepare the dinner which you have ordered." "What do you want to say?" answered Alphonso; "we received persons of great consequence at Nocera, and we did not treat them differently." "Your Lordship was free to do so," boldly replied the cook, who then went out of the room grumbling. "There now," said Alphonso, "what a passion he has put himself in! God knows all the plans he had concerted!" However, the secretary caused a third dish to be prepared unknown to him; his Lordship seemed as if he did not observe it while at dinner, but he gave him a severe reprimand afterwards: "A bishop's table," he said, "ought not to resemble those of the great, it would be a real scandal; poverty does not injure a bishop; on the contrary it does him honour." When Mgr. Albertini, the bishop of Caserto, came to Arienzo, Alphonso ordered three more dishes than usual to be prepared; Brother Francis Anthony, remembered the brilliant reception which Alphonso had received in

passing through Caserto, and applied to one of our fathers to obtain some more. The father had a lively discussion with his Lordship about it. "I cannot waste money which belongs to the poor in feasts; I am their father and their steward, but not the delapidator of their possessions. I know not with what face one can eat of dishes prepared with the blood of those unhappy creatures who have no bread." The father managed so that he got some more dishes at dessert. The fact is, that his Lordship counted soup and boiled meat as two dishes; but if he saw that the soup had not been included, even though he did not reprove the brother for it aloud, he manifested his dissatisfaction to him by his looks. The matter did not end here: the nuns sent three good dishes of dessert instead of one; when Alphonso saw them he was quite annoyed, and would only allow one to be touched. "These good nuns of the Holy Redeemer," he said to his brother bishop, "are so poor, we must send them something;" then addressing the other guests, he said to them, "His Lordship does not want any more; he prefers conferring a charity on these poor females;" and he despatched the bearer to St. Agatha that same instant.

His table linen was so common that it looked quite discreditable; the dishes were in keeping. His only candlesticks were of brass; the saltcellars were not even of china, they were made of earthenware. On another occasion Alphonso

received Mgr. Borgia and another prelate; and he sent to borrow plates and dishes from the lords of Lucca, according to custom. The brother attendant and secretary Verzalla had in the meantime provided them unknown to him, however, his Lordship had no suspicion of this; and one day when he received Canon Albanese, and Don Andrew Fiddei at dinner, at Arienzo, he told the brother to go and borrow plates and dishes, knives and forks from the nuns, in order not to inconvenience the family of Lucca too often: but the brother did not feel it necessary to go so far.

In conclusion, during the whole of his episcopate Alphonso never had a penny in his hands: the revenues of the diocese were kept by the excellent Brother Francis Anthony, who gave it to him as he required it.

Let us crown this chapter by the affecting testimony of Pascal Buonopani, a gentleman of la Grotta, who when he went to visit Alphonso at Arienzo in 1769, could not help weeping at seeing the great destitution of his host. "I have seen the ideal of poverty in Mgr. Liguori," he said to every body, "what indigence is there throughout the palace! some of the rooms are quite bare, others have three straw chairs made of unpolished poplar-wood in them, the simplest sort of tables, and a bed equally poor. If the saintly bishop required to move about, his servant drew him up and down in the room by means of a rope attached to a shabby wheel-chair."

CHAPTER LXVIII.

After the example of our blessed Lord, who took on Himself all the iniquities of the world in order that He might Himself satisfy the justice of God, Alphonso unceasingly offered himself to God as an expiatory victim for the sins of his people.

He never omitted to discipline himself to blood every day, and the walls of his chamber would have borne constant witness of these macerations, if Mgr. Rossi his successor had not had them covered over by several coatings of white-wash. In order that his penances might remain concealed, Alphonso wished that his drawers, which were always stained with blood, should be washed by the lay-brother, not by a stranger; but he entrusted them to Donna Catherine de Lucca, a female of respectability and of advanced age, and she positively asserted that they were steeped in blood, as if they had been plunged into it.

The Father Master, John Dominic Eanti Lombardo, prior of the monastery of Durazzano, once went to the bishop's house on account of the examinations which were to take place, and he occupied a room close to that of his Lordship; the very day the examination terminated, he wished to set out immediately, although it was late in the day, and when he was urged to re-

main, he said, "I would return were it midnight, for I have not the heart to hear the flagellations of this poor old man any longer."

The vigils of feasts were marked days with Alphonso, on which he mortified himself still more than usual, in order to obtain an increase of graces from God for himself and for his flock. On such days he generally scourged himself with divers cruel instruments, and especially with small cords armed with very sharp steel stars. He also redoubled his macerations during the carnival, and on other profane fêtes. Not satisfied with these bloody disciplines, he also mortified his flesh by horse-hair shirts studded with iron points, or by sharp little crosses with which he covered his shoulders and his arms and legs; when he sat down or got up again his motions betrayed his sufferings. All the particulars of these instruments would have been unknown, if the curiosity of some people had not revealed them to us. "I had the honour of living in filial intimacy with him," said Canon Michelle, "and I secretly saw them all in a strong box of which his Lordship kept the key under his bed; I could not help shuddering the first time I opened it."

Don Joseph Razzano attests, that when he was at Durazzano for the visitation, his Lordship said to him one evening, "We shall meet again after the sermon." Now he was so prompt, that he went to his Lordship just as he was changing his linen, and though he was very dexterous in covering himself, Razzano observed

that he had on a hair-shirt more than four inches in size. His Lordship had managed to conceal this penance so well, that neither Brother Francis Anthony nor Alexis the attendant ever perceived it.

Although he arranged at the first, that his dinner should consist of soup and bouilli, he did not fail to find excuses for doing without one of these dishes; and he often was satisfied with soup and some fruit, or a little fish. I know from the grand-vicar Rubini, that he only ate once in the day for several years; there was a time even when he lived on abstinence food entirely; in a word, he reduced himself to such a miserable amount of food, that his body could scarcely bear it any longer. Don Virgil Cimino the priest, who was also his secretary, relates that the doctors on seeing the impaired state of his health, ordered the lay-brother at least to make his soup with meat, but in order to do this, he was not informed that it was done. This miserable nourishment was also always seasoned with very bitter herbs, such as abysnthe, aloes, &c. In fine, what he left was so bad, that not only the poor, but even animals, would not touch it. During the day he used also to chew these herbs in order to mortify his palate, and he had such a quantity of them, that one quite smelt them on entering his room.

According to the testimony of Don Manco, and when Alphonso ate anywhere but at home, he had a thousand stratagems for avoiding partaking of what was before him: sometimes he

carved himself, or distributed portions; sometimes he appeared to be giving his attention to a little dog; at other times, when he thought that it would not be noticed, he mingled bitter herbs with the little that he took.

During the whole time that he was bishop he never once complained of any dish being badly cooked, although accidents of this sort were not rare in his house. One day when he was at dinner, he asked for something to drink; instead of wine, the servant took a bottle of vinegar. Alphonso drank it without manifesting the least displeasure; a little while afterwards, the grand-vicar also asked to drink, but no sooner had he raised the glass to his lips than he got up angrily and lavished a torrent of reproaches on the servant; but his Lordship laughed, and excused the servant.

On another occasion, when he was taking his meal in bed, where he was detained by his infirmity, the same thing befell him again, and although the vinegar was the strongest which could be procured, his Lordship said nothing about it. Only the next day he said to the servant, "Do not give me the same wine I had yesterday, for I took it for vinegar."

There was nothing, however innocent, of which he did not make an offering to Jesus crucified. He liked fresh fruit, and used it as a remedy on account of his sedentary life; for this reason his brother Hercules took care to supply him with the best fruit which was to be got in Naples; but Alphonso gave it to the nuns of

the Holy Redeemer; he did the same thing when he got rare fish, sweet things, or other delicacies from his brother, or from those nuns who were related to him.

He would not permit any species of caged birds to be in his palace. "The house of a bishop," said he, "is not a place for pleasure, but for penance." His secretary Don Felix procured a canary for himself; as his room was close to the chapel, his Lordship heard the bird singing as he went to celebrate mass; he immediately entered the room, as if to call the secretary, and casting his eyes on the cage, said to him, "That must be taken away; the least thing destroys these birds, and when one loses them, one feels sorry for it for weeks afterwards." One day when he was himself offered some canaries he refused them, and said, "This passion is still lacking in us! No, no, a little later and we should weep over it."

We have mentioned that whilst in the congregation Alphonso sometimes played on the harpsichord after dinner in the community-room, especially when the young men were present, in order to amuse them and to teach them to sing his hymns; but the moment he was appointed to the bishopric of St. Agatha, he entirely denied himself this innocent pleasure. While he was still at Nocera, and on the point of setting out to go to his church, Don Joseph Messina, the priest, begged him to play the harpsichord. "Oh, what a scandal!" answered Alphonso; "a bishop play the harpsichord! peo-

ple would say, that instead of thinking of his diocese, he spent his time in playing. The amusements of a bishop are to give audience to all, to welcome the poor, and to pray." The following incident will show with what constancy he persevered in his resolution: He had the harpsichord of the master of the seminary chapel carried to the palace, in order that Don Alexander Speranza might put his song in honour of St. Joseph to music; he never allowed himself to touch it, although his face plainly showed how much he would have liked to do so. In the midst of the sufferings which continually tormented him, he never sought for any other alleviations than those which were prescribed for him by the physicians. Father Caputo, on seeing him one day oppressed with a very bad sick head-ache, offered to procure him some of the water of St. Vincent Ferrer, with the confidence that the saint would cure him, or at least relieve him. "Shall we go and apply to St. Vincent for such a little thing?" answered his Lordship. "If we want to address him, let us pray to him for the salvation of our souls, and for a good passage into eternity; as to what I suffer, it is nothing."

Although he was sinking under the weight of years, he was always careful to mortify his senses. He never indulged in any gratification of the eyes, however innocent it might be. "I am certain," said Father Caputo to me, "that he scarcely knew that there was such a town as Arienzo or St. Agatha in the world." Father

Raphael di Ruvo, who was intimate with him, wrote to me and said, "Alphonso was such a great enemy to himself, that he had a universal hatred for all kinds of recreation." And the canon Petti said, "His mortified life filled all who saw it with confusion, and sufficed to change their lives." Some may perhaps fancy that a body which was so exhausted in the day, had at least some rest at night. Canon Michelle nevertheless attests that he slept at least as frequently on the floor as in bed. His bed, besides, was a punishment, for his palliasse was so thin that his body rested on the bare boards. "He never had it shaken," Brother Francis Anthony said to me, "during all the years which preceded his great infirmity." One morning his attendant Alexis saw that his bed was quite out of order, and was going to readjust it, but his Lordship perceived this, and said to him, "What fancy have you taken in your head? Is it because I am paralytic?" and he immediately sent him away. "In the depth of winter," said the same canon, "we were curious to know if he ever went to bed; we generally found it as untouched in the morning as it had been in the evening." His secretary Don Felix Verzalla had a singular adventure connected with this. One evening when it was already late, his Lordship sent for him to hear his confession; on leaving his room, he took the key and went to his Lordship. During the confession he inadvertently placed the key on a little table close by him. When he had satisfied his Lordship, he went to the

grand-vicar, who had not yet gone to bed, and he staid and conversed with him for a long while; just as he left him, he perceived that he had not got his key, and this put him into the greatest embarrassment, for on the one hand he did not wish to wake his Lordship; on the other, he could not make up his mind to pass the night standing. What could he do? He took off his shoes and groped his way to his Lordship's room, he gently turned the key and approached the little table, where he knew he had deposited the object of his search; he thought that all difficulty was over, when on reaching the middle of the room he knocked against Alphonso stretched on the floor. His Lordship arose in alarm, and the secretary, who was still more terrified, seized his key, and flew off as fast as possible. Alphonso was then about seventy years of age. Next morning when the secretary went to him, Alphonso looked disconcerted and blushed. "Don Felix," he said to him, "it does not do to wander into other people's rooms at night." Let us now add one other testimony of our saint's penances; it is that of Canon Rubini: "His Lordship was as cruel towards himself, as he was kind towards others," said he. "I should make you shudder, were I to relate to you all the particulars of his macerations, his abstinences from food, his daily scourgings to blood, of the hair-shirts and iron chains which kept his body in a continual state of mortification, his watchings, and, in short, all which can afflict the flesh was made use of unceasingly."

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

The successor to Clement XIV. was not even elected, ere Alphonso again thought of resigning his bishopric; being then an octogenarian and a paralytic, the burthen of the episcopate seemed no longer endurable to him. He was not however free from his accustomed fears, and as he felt doubts as to the validity of his reasons, he again opened his heart to Father Villani, who was then on a mission at Tarento; he wrote as follows to him: "The thought of giving in my resignation has returned to me; read this letter with attention, and recommend the matter to Jesus Christ, because I do not wish to follow my own will, but to do that which is pleasing to God; for this reason I wish to act under obedience. For the present there is no need of speaking about it; I will wait until the Pope is nominated.

"On the one hand, the embarrassments I endure in governing are too great; sick and paralytic, I cannot go anywhere; scruples beset me on all sides, and I am in perpetual uneasiness; I therefore should like to end the few days I

have yet to live, in the congregation. On the other hand, although I certainly can no longer visit my diocese, I believe that the grand-vicar supplies this want adequately. Besides, as my head is always clear, it appears to me I can provide for everything by my letters, and that I leave no disorder without providing a remedy. I am careful in extirpating all abuses, and make use of the aid of the secular authorities in case of need. Priests fear me, for I punish them as I am bound to do. I watch over the seminary, and the examination of candidates for holy orders, and all whom I have ordained are fit to hear confessions and to be priests. I confer livings on those who are the most worthy, after the most minute inquiries. I am very particular in regard to nuns, in order that all may walk in the right path. I do not say all this through vanity, but to submit it to your consideration. I must also add, that I think that I can be more useful as regards the affairs of the congregation, by remaining in my present position, than by leaving it. Here arises my difficulty; on the one hand, I should like to be at rest, and on the other, I think that when I do retire I shall not do half what I do now I am a bishop. It is true that I can be of use to the subjects, by retiring into the congregation, particularly as regards the young men, and this is what perplexes me. I recommend myself to God, and I entreat your Reverence also to recommend the matter to Him, because when you return from the mission, and when the new Pope is elected, we must con-

sult Mgr. Borgia about all this, in order to decide on what course is to be followed. I shall wait during this winter until then, and I shall cause all the missions in the diocese to be completed. To conclude, when you come we will speak about it, for I wish to do God's will alone. I bless your Reverence, and all your companions."

Amongst all these considerations the thought of resigning was the predominant one in his mind. He consulted various zealous bishops, and in particular Mgr. Lusco, bishop of Lucero, and they all thought that he need have no scruples in resigning his office. He was not satisfied even with that, and as he wished not to do anything but in obedience, and to be sure of the will of God, he took no resolution until he had received the dicision of his director; and although he had not approved of this resignation at first, yet on account of the state to which Alphonso was reduced, he then advised it, and told him that he ought to resign without any scruples, and that he was even bound to do it, as he would abridge his life were he to continue to support the painful burthen of the episcopate. Such was the opinion of Father Villani; he however doubted whether the Pope would consent to receive Alphonso's resignation. One day when our Father Don John Maria Augustine was present, his Lordship said, "There is no reason to doubt about it; he will accept it, for I am certain that I ought to die in the congregation, and you will see that I shall die in it as

a subject;" and he twice repeated that he must die a subject. He prophesied, but the mystery was not then understood. The year 1775 was a happy year for Holy Church. On the 15th of February, his Eminence Braschi was elected Pope under the title of Pius VI. After the exaltation of the new pontiff, Alphonso's ardour to be set free from the weight of the episcopate increased. Being assured that in resigning his office he should not be doing a thing displeasing to God, but that it would even be advantageous to his diocese, he longed for the time when he might retire into his cell. "The clouds now begin to disperse," he wrote to Father Villani on the 1st March, 1775, "I have already spoken to Mgr. Puoti, and in a little while the affair will be commenced." But during the proceedings which ensued upon this Alphonso still felt his accustomed scruples.

He had to leave a spouse whom he loved with tenderness; and he knew not who would come in his place. "God only knows how I am tormented," he wrote to Father Villani on the 9th of the same month. "The fear of abandoning my church in order to escape the cross disturbs me anew. I should have been very glad if your Reverence had spoken to Mgr. Borgia again; I fear that the apprehension of having acted through self-love will torment me during the whole of the short time I may yet have to live."

When steps were taken in the matter at Rome, his uneasiness redoubled. "Give me courage,"

he wrote to the same father on the 14th of May, "and show me that I do the will of God in abandoning my diocese, in order that I may leave it for ever in peace." Alphonso would have been glad if the Pope, who had nominated him to the episcopate *motu proprio*, should also release him from it of his own accord, without his having anything to do with it himself. He presented the following petition to the Pope at the commencement of May:

"Most Holy Father,

"I wish to represent to your Holiness, that I, the bishop of St. Agatha de' Goti, in the kingdom of Naples, have attained the advanced age of seventy-nine years. By the aid of God I have continued to support the burthen of the episcopate for thirteen years; but I am incapable of bearing it any longer. I have many infirmities which fortell a speedy death: I suffer from an affection of the chest, which has several times reduced me to great extremities; the palpitations of my heart have also several times brought me to the brink of the grave; besides this, I have at present such a great weakness of head that I feel often quite stupified.

"Besides all these maladies, I am also subject to divers dangerous attacks, for which I have to make use of bleeding, blistering, and other remedies. I have received the Holy Viaticum four times and Extreme Unction twice, during the time that I have been bishop.

"I must add to what I have just stated, that

I have other infirmities which prevent my fulfilling my duties as a bishop. My hearing is much impaired, and my subjects suffer much from it; for when they wish to speak to me of private matters, I cannot hear them unless they raise their voices. The paralysis has made such progress that I cannot now write a single line; I can scarcely sign my name, and I do it so badly that it is very difficult to read it. I have become such a cripple that I cannot walk a step, and I require the aid of two people in making the least movement. I pass my time on my bed, or I sit helplessly in my chair. I cannot go through ordinations now, nor can I preach, and what is still worse, I cannot now visit my diocese, which necessarily suffers thereby. All this being the case, I think I am bound to beseech your Holiness to accept my resignation of my bishopric, which resignation I formally tender in this petition, because I see that the state in which I am, causes me to fail in the duties of my office and in the right government of my flock. I confidently hope that your Holiness will take pity on me, in consideration of the miserable state to which I am reduced, and that you will console me by accepting my resignation, in order that my flock may be relieved, for they obtain little assistance from so incapable a shepherd, and also that I may be freed from the scruples which torment me when I reflect on my unfitness for government.

"I wish to lay the state of my Church before you: the diocese contains about thirty thousand

souls; the income amounts to about twenty-six thousand ducats annually, according to a calculation made during the last four years. The cathedral has thirty-one canons with five prebendaries. In the territory of Arienzo, there is a college which numbers twenty-four canonries. There are three convents of inclosed nuns, namely, those at St. Agatha, those in the town of Airola, and in the territory of Arienzo, and also two asylums where there is also a church where the functions of the Church are celebrated.

"I very confidently look forward to receiving the consent of your Holiness as well as your blessing, so that I may have nothing else to think of than to prepare myself for death, which will shortly befall me."

He sent this letter to Cardinal Crescenzi, who loved him and favoured him very much, and he begged him to consent to present it to the Pope, and to support it by his mediation. "I require," said he, "your Eminence's support, and I confidently hope to obtain it, after all the kindness which you have unceasingly shown me up to the present time. Do have the kindness to try and obtain permission for the resignation which I propose to our holy Father in the inclosed letter. I quite think that your Eminence would not refuse me this favour even at first sight; but still I entreat you to take trouble to read over all the reasons I lay before his Holiness. Your Eminence will then see how unfit I am to rule over my Church, and will approve of my resolution. The

goodness of your Eminence leads me to hope that you will take the trouble to speak to our holy Father by word of mouth, because in Rome I have no one who can do so with such good effect as your Eminence. I therefore once more most humbly implore you to deign to grant me this favour, and to do so as soon possible, for I am continually sighing after the day when I shall be set free from the government of my church, as I feel tormented with constant scruples about it."

He wrote to Mgr. Calcagnini the Pope's chamberlain at the same time as follows: "An opportunity presents itself of profiting by your Eminence's kindness. I beg you to read the petition which I send to our holy father; you will I trust take pity on me on seeing to what a miserable state I am reduced, and you will act as my advocate with our holy father, and intercede for me, so that I may obtain from him the favour I so much desire. Should it be necessary for me to write again, or to renew this petition, send to his Eminence Bezzonico, pro-secretary, and let me know. The great kindness which your Eminence has shown towards me on several occasions, has inspired me with the confidence in addressing myself to you and with the certainty of being heard. This being premised, I entreat you to do it as soon as possible; for scruples beset me and cause this time of uncertainty to seem like a thousand years: the weight of the episcopate makes me quite sleepless, and my last illness has rendered me incapable of fulfilling my duties."

He sent this letter to the advocate Don Melchior Terragnoli, in order to obtain his co-operation in this affair. His Lordship did not know him personally, but as he knew his affection for our Congregation he wrote to him as follows: "My much esteemed Don Melchior, I have not yet had the privilege of speaking to you or of writing to you; but knowing the great charity with which you have supported the members of my Congregation at Rome, I hope you will also exercise the same charity towards me in my present circumstances, and when the security of my eternal salvation is concerned. I am laden with years, and on the point of death, as you will see in the inclosed petition, which contains the formal resignation of my bishopric. I have thought it well to beseech Cardinal Castelli, who has several times given me proofs of especial affection, to speak to our holy father, and thus to obtain for me the favour of having my resignation accepted; I therefore beg you to deliver my letter to him, together with my petition to the Pope. If you should afterwards require a power of attorney, or any other legal formality, please to let me know."

No sooner was it discovered at Arienzo that his Lordship had sent in his resignation to the Pope, than the news spread throughout all the diocese. It caused general affliction. People consoled themselves however that the present Pope would not permit it any more than his predecessors had done. The superiors of religious orders wept for the loss of a protector who

was both powerful and zealous; the nuns, for that of a father and comforter. The clergy felt as if in him they lost the soul of the ecclesiastical state, and the seculars a tender and vigilant pastor; and so they all addressed the most ardent supplications to Heaven for the preservation of their saintly bishop.

CHAPTER II.

Alphonso redoubled his exertions and labours for the welfare of his diocese, although he was in a position which seemed to justify repose. He was especially pains-taking in encouraging his priests to labour for the salvation of souls, and to edify them by their own examples; the good were special objects of his most tender solicitude to the last. As Don Cæsar Michella, the priest of the church of the Carmelites at St. Agatha, had been made a canon, his Lordship felt great consolation in seeing him replaced by Don Vincent Testa of Real-Valle, whom he had trained at the seminary, but on hearing that he was seriously ill, he was most deeply afflicted, for he had centred all his brightest hopes upon him. "The poor young man," he wrote to Don Michella on the 30th of January, 1773, "has been extremely oppressed by a violent catarrh which has endangered his life. I have forbidden him to leave Valle without my per-

mission, in order that so precious a life may not be exposed. Meanwhile, I must beg your Reverence to continue to fill the post, and I give you full powers to enable you so to do." He was equally full of solicitude for his seminary. The students were continually in his thoughts, and he always wished Father Master Caputo to inform him of their progress in knowledge and in virtue. Love and severity were in him admirably combined together. He was always as kind in rewarding the zealous, as he was vigilant in chastising the tepid, and in expelling the incorrigible. "I do not wish to leave my successor overburthened with old debts," he used to say on this subject.

Before he left his vineyard, he was also careful to have it entirely visited throughout by faithful labourers. From the preceding September he applied to the various congregations in order to have a sufficient number of missionaries to preach throughout all the diocese. He even wrote to Rome to the general of the Dominican fathers, in order to obtain a good number of his religious from the monastery of la Sanita in Naples, and he asked the prince to allow him to make use of his house during the time of the mission. "This will probably be the last general mission I shall give in my diocese," he wrote to him on the 19th of September, 1774, "for I enter upon my seventy-ninth year this year, and I am looking for the approach of death from day to day, both on account of my great age, and also on account

of my infirmities, which warn me that I am not far from the grave."

Father Master Gessari, and nine other celebrated Dominicans, came to him in November; when they had, to his great consolation, ended the mission in the town of St. Agatha most successfully, the company separated; one portion went into the parish of St. Thomas, and the rest, who were reinforced by other subjects from Naples, began to labour in the territory of Frasso. After that they united together in order to go to Airola, and from thence they went to the populous hamlet of Mojano. The fathers of St. Peter of Cesazano laboured in divers other places; the fathers of our congregation also went about everywhere, and to these latter Alphonso rejoiced to see united the missionaries whom he had himself formed at Airola, Arienzo, and Durazzano. In fine, there was not an estate, a village, or a hamlet throughout the diocese which was not cultivated by zealous missionaries. The chapel of Canullo, which was four miles from Arienzo, had also the happiness of obtaining a mission. His Lordship arranged the smallest details of this great work. The Father Master Massana, the Dominican, the prefect of the missions of la Sanita, fixed on the evening of the 12th of November for his arrival at St. Agatha. "I was much pleased at hearing of this charity," Alphonso wrote to Father Master Gessari; "but I have informed the prefect that if the mission commences on the 12th, which is a Monday, all the days which intervene between

it and the following Sunday will be lost, because so few people will go to church. The same thing once happened to myself; and from that time I resolved never again to begin a mission on a working day." He arranged about the accommodation of the missionaries and all that the missionaries required. "Take care and prepare two beds," he wrote on the 24th of January to the priest Deodatus de Bucciano, "as well as various cooking utensils, &c. I must beg you to speak to that good man belonging to Paslorano who has a house quite close to the church." He also asked for the favour of the Prince of la Riccia. "I stand in need of several favours from your Excellency just at present," he wrote to him. "The first is for the mission of Airola, where I entreat you to lend me a part of your palace for the fathers of St. Dominic Major, who will come and give this mission, and whom I have not been able to obtain until after importuning them for two years. The second favour refers to your other house at Arpaja, where I wish to send the fathers of my Congregation, and I ask you for the same thing for another country place and village."

During this time he did not omit to second the labours of his missionaries himself. On the 12th of April, 1775, the secretary Cintino wrote to the canon Don Liborius Carfora: "His Lordship bids me tell you that you must be careful in watching N., the lay-brother. You know the convent where he lives, and you must

see whether he continues to visit the house of N., to the scandal of the neighbourhood. He wishes you to inform him about this as soon as possible, and that you should come here to him this morning to speak to him by word of mouth touching this monk."

This last general mission completely cleansed and sanctified the whole diocese. In order that the passion of Jesus Christ should be well impressed on all hearts, Alphonso caused a picture of it to be painted as large as life and in the most moving manner, and he caused this picture to be carried in procession through the church on the last evening of the exercises of the devout life. In order also to excite souls to compassionate the dolours of the Blessed Virgin, he had the statue of our Lady of Dolours exposed and carried processionally in the same way. "Do not forget," he wrote in a circular of the 16th of April, 1775, "to have the procession of our Lady as I have pointed out." In this letter he points out all that must be done in order to succeed in inspiring the people with compunction through the picture of Jesus crucified, as well as by that of our Lady of Sorrows. "It is an exercise which is calculated to affect the most insensible when performed as I have enjoined." He in the same letter expresses himself with great zeal against obstinate sinners; he does not wish them to be left alone, but rather that they should be terrified. "In all places," said he, "where corruption or any special vice exists, such as blas-

phemy, licentiousness, or any similar one, a great deal of good is obtained by the malediction of habitual sinners. The preacher being vested in a surplice and a black stole, recites an act of contrition, after which he takes a lighted torch, and says, 'I curse not the good nor penitent sinners, but only those who are not resolved to forsake sin.'" He then mentions different sorts of sinners, such as blasphemers, the revengeful, parents who neglect to watch over the morals of their children, &c.

"'All those who are obstinate in these vices God curses, and I also curse them in God's stead.' Whilst he pronounces these words, he raises his voice quite high, and whilst extending one hand he rings a bell with the other as loudly as possible.

"There is one amongst us who has taken upon him to say that this ceremony is too terrifying. O God! and why is it done, except for the very purpose of alarming the hardened? However, before commencing this ceremony, it is well to say to the people: 'Hearken; David curses obstinate sinners in Holy Writ;' 'Maledicti qui declinant a mandatis tuis.' 'It is thus that I curse them.' On saying these words he must sound the knell with the great bell. These ceremonies are especially of great utility in large towns. The fathers must not inform the clerics that such an exercise is to take place, so that no one may oppose it and assume a tone of authority, and say, that it is not fitting. The fear which it inspires only

concerns the obstinate, or those who after having heard sermons are not yet resolved to give themselves up to God. It is a ceremony which I have had practised in nearly every part of the diocese; it has been most advantageous, and has not occasioned the mischief which some have dreaded. I specially advise preachers frequently to repeat certain things in particular, and they are as follows: Let them inculcate what a grievous sin it is to conceal a sin through shame; in their sermons let them dwell as much as possible on the necessity of recommending oneself to God, especially when temptation assails us, and particularly temptations of the flesh. Let them in all their sermons preach on love towards Jesus crucified and on devotion to the Blessed Virgin. And when any habitual vice exists in a place, such as vengeance, impurity, or theft, frequent reference must be made to this vice. Before making an act of sorrow, the people must be caused to be silent; the motives for sorrow should not exceed two or three, but they must be different in all the sermons which are made; and every evening after an act of sorrow, some peculiar favour should be asked of the Blessed Virgin. If the people are made to say an *Ave Maria*, it should be said before the sermon and not after, for fear that the people may grow cold and complain when they return home."

CHAPTER III.

The holy father Pius VI., knew too well how to appreciate Alphonso's zeal and the great good which he was continually effecting in the Church of St. Agatha, in spite of his great infirmities, readily to accept his resignation of his office. When he received his petition from the hands of his Eminence Castelli on the 5th of May, he was not the least disposed to grant it, although the cardinal represented to him by word of mouth Alphonso's great age and the bodily ailments which oppressed him. During this state of things two of our fathers arrived in Rome; they were D.D. Capuano and Rastelli, who had been giving the missions in the Abbruzzes; when they presented themselves to pay their homage to the holy father, his Holiness being informed that they were subjects of the congregation, asked them about Mgr. Liguori. The fathers thinking that they would thus be doing a thing which would be agreeable to Alphonso, and being impatient to see him once more in the midst of them, did not fail to confirm what the Pope had heard regarding his infirmities, nay, they even exaggerated them. "Most holy father," said they, "he is in a state which quite makes one grieve for him: he is deaf, blind, and laden with so many infirmities, that he has no longer even the appear-

ance of a man." The Pope turned to Mgr. Calcagnini, and said to him, "Do you hear what these fathers say? If this be the case, we must not distress him." And upon this he determined to accept his resignation, although he did so with much regret. He therefore caused his Eminence Girand to write to Alphonso on the 9th of May, 1775, as follows: "His Holiness felt sincere sorrow at hearing, through the letter which Cardinal Castelli has forwarded to him, of the sad state of your health, which has made you resolve on tendering your resignation to him. This causes the holy father to feel very great regret, as he knows how to appreciate your merits and your pastoral vigilance; but as he is, on the other hand, aware of the complete justice of the motives which cause you to proffer it, he does not wish to prolong your mental anxieties, and so he accepts your resignation, which must be made according to legal formalities. This is what our holy father has commanded me to intimate to your Lordship, in reply to the above-named letter; and with sentiments of the highest esteem, I heartily kiss your hand, and am," &c.

Alphonso was filled with joy on hearing that the Pope had accepted his resignation, and immediately informed Father Villani of it, who was then on a mission at Capua. He would have liked to have him with him at Arienzo, but as he was not able to do this, he wrote to him again on the 13th of the same month, "The will of God be done, which orders that your Reve-

rence should be engaged in this mission; however, that I may not leave the diocese with scruples, I must consult you about several things. I quit it without pain, because I quit it in obedience. I fear however that some grandee may replace me; for there are so many candidates already. In that case there would be an end put to all the pains that I have taken. I pray God to have compassion on my diocese. I entreat your Reverence and all the others not to speak to me any more about my diocese, in order to take away all uneasiness on this head."

When his Lordship's resignation became known, there was universal lamentation. Alphonso wrote and told Archdeacon Don Francis Rainone to inform the chapter of it. His letter, which he did not sign as Bishop of St. Agatha, but as Alphonso Maria of the Holy Redeemer, caused quite a sensation in the chapter and throughout the whole town of St. Agatha. "It is a chastisement from God," said Archdeacon Rainone; "we have not known how to appreciate him."

There was not a canon, nor even a gentleman, who did not eagerly hasten to go to Arienzo to complain to his Lordship of this measure, already so far advanced; and even those who had experienced the severity of his punishments, were now undeceived, and did justice to his merits, and only felt regret at hearing the tidings of his departure. Notwithstanding the mortification the canon D. Francis Petti had received on account of his brother, whom Alphonso had caused to be arrested and taken

to Montefusco, where he endured a long imprisonment, he repaired to Arienzo, and said, with tears in his eyes, "What have you done, my Lord? God forgive you for it; the mischief you are doing to the whole diocese is irreparable."

The sorrow which this act caused at Arienzo was not less. The clergy especially, who received the news before all the rest, and who had enjoyed his presence for so many years, were in the greatest affliction at it; they felt all the more sorrow, from the greatest part of them having been brought up under him at the seminary and selected by him for this college. There was not a single canon or priest who did not go to see him at his palace, and who did not complain of the step he had taken with tearful eyes; but if this loss caused general regret, the parish priests felt it the most. "Which of us," said they, "can now acquit himself properly of his charge? With the assistance which Mgr. Liguori gave us when there was any disorder, our whole business consisted in informing him of it, for he could do anything for both priests and seculars, with the barons and the king." Others said, "Where shall we now find this purse always open to prevent suffering and to relieve the unhappy?" Even the archpriest of Frasso himself, who had made such violent opposition on the subject of the tithes, and of the district parish church which Alphonso had wished to establish in this territory, could not help groaning on hearing of his approaching

departure. He was at Naples at the time, and on being told that Alphonso was no longer able to govern his church on account of his great age and palsy, he said, "That is not the case; Mgr. Liguori is capable of governing it by his name alone."

On the eve of his departure, Canon Truppa and the priest Don Pascal Bartolini went to visit his Lordship, and could not refrain from weeping: "Do you think that I am not sad at going? In truth, it makes me but too sad, for I shall have to leave my children. I go away," added he, raising his voice, "because God wills it to be so. The state to which I am reduced compelled me to inform the Pope of it, but I declared to the holy father, that if my diocese would suffer the least injury, I was ready to toil on here until my death; but if I quit you in body, I leave my heart in the midst of you."

The poor were the most afflicted of all. Penitent women, poor girls, and a great number of indigent families who had relied on his assistance, were inconsolable at losing him. "Mgr. Liguori's resignation," said a worthy ecclesiastic to me, "has been peculiarly felt by all the poor throughout the whole diocese." Our Father D. Angelo Gandinot met a poor villager amongst others, who could not be comforted at his Lordship's departure. "When we used to go to the mountain," said he, "we left our children at his Lordship's palace, and we felt sure that they would be fed; but now that

he is going away, to whom shall we have recourse?"

The infirm also and all the prisoners who had been visited by him and had received his alms, could not help weeping as much as the rest at the loss of their benefactor. "We shall not have Mgr. Liguori any more, who used to send to comfort us, or come and do so himself," said they. "Who will now intercede for us with our creditors, and who will plead our cause with the magistrates? His Lordship could do every thing, for he was a saint, and every one honoured him as such." This universal affliction was a sorrow to Alphonso also, and if it had cost him much to become united to this dear spouse, it cost him still more to separate from her.

This resignation was felt even at Naples and elsewhere. When the Marquis of Avena, counsellor to his majesty, was informed of it, he said, "Mgr. Liguori has done ill, yes, very ill indeed. If it rested with me, I would make him remain in the diocese. His presence was of itself enough to govern it, and to make every one in it do his duty."

When Mgr. Capece Galeati, the archbishop of Capua, heard that the Pope had accepted his resignation, he said with feelings of deep sorrow, "The Pope has accepted Mgr. Liguori's resignation, he who did so much good in the Church of God, and he has refused mine, and I am useless."

Don Hercules also showed displeasure at it.

"I hear that you complain of my resignation," Alphonso wrote to him on the 22nd of July, 1775; "I have not resigned to pass my time in idleness, but because my infirmities prevent my fulfilling my duties. I represented my ills to the Pope, and the Pope has accepted my resignation." Alphonso feared that there was some interested feeling in play in his mind about it; he therefore said, "Perhaps you are afraid that I shall go to law against you on account of the inheritance; for from what I hear, it is to be feared that I shall not be able to touch my pension from the College of Doctors, unless I were to reside in Naples, which I cannot do. Be without fear however, for I renounce all claims to our common property. I hope that the Pope will assign me a pension, and that the court of Naples will ratify it. If this should not be the case, and if the college also refuses the pension, I shall be satisfied with the carlins I get for masses, and which will be enough for me to live on."

The resignation was formally accepted by the consistory on the 17th of July; on hearing this news, some one in the diocese said to his Lordship in jest, that since his resignation had been accepted, he appeared to hold his head straighter than before; "Yes," replied Alphonso, "because the weight of Mount Taburno has been taken off my shoulders." (It is a very high mountain which overtops the town of St. Agatha.)

After he had thanked the Pope for the great favour he had deigned to confer on him, he also

asked him to allow him to preserve all the privileges annexed to the episcopate, especially in regard to the portable altar. In reply, Cardinal Girand informed him that the holy father had deigned to grant his request in the fullest sense. The Pope added another favour to this, and one which Alphonso had not asked. "Our holy father," the cardinal wrote to him, "thinks of reserving you a suitable pension secured on your Church, and he wishes to settle as to its amount with yourself." As Alphonso did not wish to burthen his Church, he replied that if the Pope deigned to grant him a pension, four hundred ducats would be enough for him. His moderation was extremely edifying to the holy father, who in consideration of his circumstances graciously assigned him eight hundred scudi. His Eminence Cardinal Castelli befriended Alphonso very much indeed on this occasion. When he was despatching the letters for the eight hundred scudi which Alphonso had obtained, he again represented to the Pope the services he had rendered to the whole Church, and the labours he had endured for the good of souls, both by his words and by his writings. When Pius VI. thus became still better acquainted with Alphonso's merits, he also gave him up the hundred and five scudi which he owed to the apostolical council, as is proved by the letter which Don Melchior Terragnoli, the secretary of his Eminence, wrote to him.

The advocate, D. John Minieri pleaded his Lordship's cause so well before the College of

Doctors at Naples, that they without hesitation agreed to give him the whole of his pension, just as he had been in the habit of receiving it up to that time. "I am worn out and decrepit," Alphonso wrote to them, "I cannot now walk a single step; I either spend my time in bed, or remain helplessly on my chair. I cannot leave my room during a great part of the year, because of my chest, and I very often feel as if I were dying. The least wind, a little rain, cold, or damp, suffice to give me a dangerous catarrh, and I am nearly eighty years of age. In conclusion, I do not wish to exact anything, because I should have a scruple of conscience in so doing. God will provide for me during the short time I have yet to live." Not satisfied with having thus testified his indifference, he also took the advice of several learned men, in order to be exempt from all uneasiness. Mgr. Testa, amongst others, replied to him, that his infirmities excused him from residence, and that other members of the college had also received their pensions for the same reason, although living elsewhere.

Meanwhile Alphonso did not lose sight of the wants of his congregation; he several times begged his brother Don Hercules to bequeath a free lodging in his own palace for the use of our fathers, conformably to what was practised there up to that time. "I entreat you," he wrote to him on the 29th of June, "to settle without delay about the charity which you wish to confer on my fathers, by giving them an asylum in

your palace; for if God were to call you to Him without giving you time to settle about these things, my fathers would have nothing. The affair of the chaplaincy must also be settled; I wish to have these two things arranged about, so that I may not have to think about them any more; for the future I do not wish to be disturbed about anything connected with this world's affairs, but only to prepare for my death, which is so near at hand. I entreat you to set me at rest on these two points."

Alphonso uttered a remarkable prophecy about this time. Divers reports were spread about concerning the person who would succeed him in the see of St. Agatha. The candidates were innumerable, and the whole diocese was in uneasiness, not knowing who might be the one selected. His Lordship himself inquired as to which of the conjectures on this subject had the most foundation; several people were mentioned to him, but he heard their names with indifference. Canon Don Peter Ferrara went to see him one day, when Alphonso again asked him if he did not know anything further as to the future election. "Mgr. Rossi, the bishop of Ischia, is talked of as the one who will be elected." "Mgr. Rossi!" replied Alphonso with earnestness. "My God! my God! I will at once write to Rome to be allowed to reside here until the arrival of the new bishop." He then became still more animated. "My poor Church!" he exclaimed, "how long wilt thou have to remain a widow and without a pastor!" He has-

tened to write to Rome, in hopes that the Pope would allow him to continue to rule over his Church until the arrival of his successor; but according to a new rule as to discipline, a bishop who had resigned was obliged to leave his diocese immediately: this was the answer he received. Alphonso had prophesied truly however, for the clergy of Ischia, contrary to all expectation, opposed the translation of their bishop to the Church of St. Agatha, which remained a widow for nearly five years. Alphonso also had another very serious affliction before the investiture of Mgr. Rossi; he heard that the Pope, on account of the differences which existed between the courts of Rome and Naples, would not nominate a bishop for St. Agatha. Some said that the vicar capitular would continue to rule over it; others, that the Pope would send there a vicar apostolical. These tidings, although done away with by the election of Mgr. Rossi, did not fail to afflict and alarm Alphonso, and for a time they even caused him loss of sleep and appetite.

We have said that Alphonso wished to be useful to his Church up to the last moment. Let us see what he on the 17th of June wrote to Mgr. Rossi, who was elected as his successor: "When your Lordship has taken possession of this Church, I trust you will do me the favour to come to Nocera for two days, when I will give you full particulars of all that can interest you regarding the bishopric, and of all that I have learnt during thirteen years of labour.

Two days will suffice to inform you of all. I hope that your Lordship by means of what I will tell you and your own experience, will be able to carry on the government in an excellent manner and for God's glory."

Mgr. Rossi went to Nocera, and Alphonso informed him of the state of his diocese with tearful eyes.

CHAPTER IV.

When Alphonso was on the point of separating from his dear Church of St. Agatha, he wished to visit his children once more in person, although he was so infirm and broken down, in order that he might humbly bid them adieu, and testify the warmth of his love towards them. In making the visitation of the parishes, he for the last time inculcated on them all perseverance in well-doing, the avoidance of sin, the frequentation of the sacraments, and above all, the love of Jesus Christ, and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. With unparalleled humility he asked pardon for his numerous failures, as he called them, and also for the scandal he had perhaps given during his government. He protested that he had loved all his children ardently and without exception, and he begged them not to forget him in their prayers to Jesus and our Lady, adding, that he trusted that when they heard of his death they would

vouchsafe to pray to God for his soul. He repeated the same thing in all the churches at Arienzo, and everywhere these last words were answered by sobs and floods of tears.

Our Lord blessed even his private farewells in quite a peculiar manner. "I have to-day," he wrote to Father Villani, on the eve of his departure, "been obliged again to drink of the cup of bitterness, although I am no longer bishop." He alluded to a wicked surgeon whom he had imprisoned at Nevano. Before he went away, he made a last appeal to this hardened sinner. "Now that I am going to leave my church, do you also leave off sin," said he to him. The emotion with which the saintly old man pronounced these words, penetrated the heart of the unhappy man, who before long became converted, for he was attacked by a sickness which made him think seriously; he made a public confession of his offences, and died in sentiments of the most sincere repentance, rendering a thousand thanks to Mgr. Liguori.

Before Alphonso left Arienzo he visited all the religious communities. It was a touching spectacle to see how humble he was wherever he went. He asked forgiveness for the excessive rigour he had perhaps made use of during his government, asserting that all had been the effect of true love, and not through any particular resentment, and that he had always sought to procure honour for the religious, and to conciliate the esteem of the people in their regard. He advised superiors to be at all times zealous for the

observance of rule, and to surmount all human considerations when the glory of Jesus Christ and the good of souls were in question. He above all entreated them to remember him at the altar, and not to forget his soul when he was dead.

He did not forget the convents and nuns. Before he took leave of them he briefly reminded them of all his paternal lessons, and said to them, "Fly from the grate, love the choir and your cells, and have a tender love for Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother, if you wish now to taste the joys of Paradise by anticipation." As he was unable from the fatigue of going to St. Agatha to make his farewells in person, he wrote a letter to the chapter, the reading of which caused many tears to be shed. The following was a private letter which he addressed on the 25th of June, to Canon Petti, who was ill at the time: "I go because God has shown me that I can no longer be useful. I am at present in such a deplorable state, that everything warns me of a speedy death. I thank you from the very bottom of my heart for all the services your Reverence has conferred on me. May Jesus Christ reward you," &c. He signed the letter thus: "Your devoted, obliged, and faithful servant, Alphonso Maria de Liguori, bishop."

The nuns of the Annunziata asked him for a keep-sake; he sent them a little picture of our Lady of Good Counsel, which he had always upon his table, and which was dear to him; he said to them that his heart was with them, that

he wished all the religious to say a Salve Regina in common for him every Saturday, and that they should recite the Litanies for him for three days after his death, which they did.

As Sister Mary Raphael, the foundress of the Nuns of the Holy Redeemer, could not see him at St. Agatha, she wrote him a most affectionate letter. Amongst other things she said to him, that when God should call him to Himself, she hoped he would not forget his daughters in Jesus Christ, and that he would bequeath his heart to them by will. His Lordship read the letter with pleasure; but when he came to the words "bequeath your heart," he said, "I always have considered Mother Raphael for a sensible woman, but I have now lost my good opinion of her. My heart indeed! What dish do they want to make of it? It is the soul which signifies; as for my body, if they wish to please me they will throw it away." The present he sent them was a simple wooden cross with the emblems of the Passion, which was in his dining-room, and which he was in the habit of kissing whenever he entered the room or went out of it.

The canons also asked him for a remembrance. He could think of nothing better to give them than another large cross, also made of unpolished wood, and with the emblems of the Passion on it, which was placed on the first landing-place of the stair-case, and which he was also in the habit of kissing whenever he went in or out of the house.

As he had nothing else to give to the Capuchin fathers, he left behind some artificial flowers for them, which adorned the altar of the Blessed Sacrament in his chapel, and he wished them to keep them in remembrance of him.

As the seminarists also came to Arienzo, Alphonso bade farewell to his dear pupils; he urged them to love Jesus Christ, to be devout towards the Blessed Virgin, and to frequent the sacraments. He exhorted them to love study, and to strive to sanctify themselves in order that they might become useful to the Church. He left them some books which belonged to him and not to the Congregation, as well as all his works.

Such were the remembrances which his Lordship left to those who were dearest to him on his departure from the diocese. Some time before this, he was once conversing with his household, when lying on his poor bed: their conversation somehow turned upon the costly things which his predecessors had left behind them; one spoke of one thing, another of another. Alphonso listened to all this in silence, and at length he pointed to a little chest under his bed: "This little chest," said he cheerfully, "will be all the valuables that I shall leave behind me." Indeed he left nothing more than was necessary for a poor religious. A few miserable beds and some cooking utensils, were all the goods which Mgr. Liguori left to the chapter of St. Agatha when he left Arienzo. As he had nothing else to give to the poor, he left them his heart: he

quitted them with a sorrowful mind; this separation was like a two-edged sword to him; he thought of the poor even in his sleep, and fancied he heard them complain and say, "Why have you abandoned us?" The very sight of a beggar was enough to affect him, towards the end of his sojourn at Arienzo; and as soon as his departure was certain, he considerably increased his alms; on the day that he left Arienzo, it was the 27th of July, 1775, the palace was, as it were, besieged by these his favoured children, and they all had the gratification of sharing in his last donations. On this same day he wrote his farewell letter to Mother Raphael, and gave his last counsels and blessing to her, and to her children. "I pray God," he wrote to her, "to give you health for the sake of the welfare of this convent, and I hope that the Lord will not call you to Himself until this community is strengthened. Be constant in exhortations regarding the avoidance of abuses and novelties; for new things, however small they may be, are capable of destroying the observance of rule by little and little, and such has been the case in so many celebrated convents. If a thing is new and deviates from ancient custom, there is cause to fear, especially when the thing becomes general. I bless you and all your daughters one by one, and pray that Jesus Christ will fill you all with His love. There is no cause to fear evil where the love of God exists. This is why you must constantly remind your daughters that they must do everything with the intention of pleasing God.

They ought at least to make frequent acts of love towards Jesus Christ and say, "My Jesus, give me Thy love. My Jesus, give me Thy love." And in addressing the Blessed Virgin let them often say, "My dear Mother, make me love Jesus Christ. My dear Mother, make me love Jesus Christ." It was with the sacred names of Jesus and Mary in his heart and on his lips, that his Lordship bade his children in Christ farewell.

When he was on the point of setting out, an increased amount of veneration was testified towards him by those of all ranks and conditions. It was a proof that people thought that in losing his Lordship they would lose a saint, that his room was quite ransacked, and all that he had made use of was carried off as relics. Some asked; others took what they wanted secretly; and as each one wished to have something, everything he had disappeared, even to the little images he had at the head of his bed. A little wooden crucifix was violently carried off by D. Fabricius Martinisi, a gentleman of Arienzo. Another took the little branch of box-wood which he used for holy water. As Constantine Silvio, the barber of the house, did not see anything else to take, he asked Alphonso for a crutch which had been thrown aside, but which his Lordship had made use of when he had the rheumatism. "Take it," said Alphonso to him, "for it may be serviceable to you some day." In fact, his son's wife, who was some years afterwards in labour for three days, owed her life

to this relic. All her family were in grief and despaired of her safety, when Silvio met with the crutch in the corner of the house, as if by chance; he remembered Alphonso, who was already honoured as a saint. "This crutch," he said to his daughter-in-law, "belonged to our late bishop, who worked so many miracles; if you have faith, and will only take it, you will be cured." What a prodigy! the woman had scarcely touched it, when she gave birth to a male child.

Alphonso ruled over the church of St. Agatha for thirteen years and fifteen days. He was only three times absent from his diocese, and that for reasons of the greatest importance; these three absences put together only amounted to three months in all. The first was when he went to Nocera to assist at the general chapter of his congregation; the second when he again went to Nocera for the recovery of his health; and the third was when he had to go to Naples in the year 1767, on account of the dangers with which his congregation was threatened.

Indeed he always felt scrupulous at being absent not only from his diocese, but even from his cathedral, without a lawful reason. One year when he had terminated his visit at Airola, his grand-vicar was in no hurry to return thither, as he did not like living at St. Agatha. His Lordship asked Peter Pollastrelli the priest, and the priest D. Joseph Truppi, if the grand-vicar was ready to set out; and on hearing that he manifested no intention to do so, he said to him

with emphasis, "I am in haste to return to St. Agatha; for that church is my spouse, and I ought to reside there; if this is disagreeable to you, do as you like." At a later period, and after the serious illness he had at Arienzo, he again thought of returning to St. Agatha. "It is to St. Agatha," exclaimed he one day, "that God has sent me, and it is there that I ought to live, were I to die by so doing." Upon that the grand-vicar and his household represented to him that the apartments he must occupy were in a ruinous state; but Alphonso, who eagerly wished to return there, hastened to send for the architect Aulicino from Maddalon; in order to prevent his having these repairs made, they then caused the architect to tell him that it was not an easy thing to do, and that the expense would be great. Alphonso yielded, upon reflecting on the grounds he had for giving way to these arguments, and especially remembering the wants of the numerous poor he had to relieve, but he did so with regret, and only that he might thereby be better able to assist the suffering members of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER V.

God, who never fails to hear the prayers of His servants, permitted Alphonso to finish his days at Nocera, and in the midst of his children. When he was on the point of leaving

Arienzo, he experienced a mixture of sorrow and of joy; of sorrow, in separating himself from a spouse he tenderly loved; and of joy at finding himself on the eve of returning to his cell. He almost feared this departure, and when the day for it had arrived, he counted the moments which were still remaining to him. Early on the morning of the 27th of July, 1775, he gave his last blessing in his dear church at St. Agatha to an immense concourse of people who had assembled there: he distributed large alms to a crowd of poor persons who solicited his charity, and he then got into the carriage, aided by his household, and accompanied by Father Villani. It is not possible to express what the people felt; the clergy wept, and the gentlemen also; but the poor especially gave way to the most sorrowful groans, for in Alphonso they lost a father, a protector, and a refuge in all their wants. Alphonso's greatest pain was caused by the affliction of the people, and he could not see their tears without shedding tears himself. When he was on his journey, he addressed his usual prayers to his saintly patrons, and particularly commended the territory of Arienzo, as well as the whole diocese of St. Agatha, to the protection of Jesus Christ and His blessed Mother; he continued his journey while reciting the rosary and canonical hours with Father Villani.

His equipage was as rich and pompous as usual! Alphonso entered the diocese in poverty, and his poverty was also manifested at his de-

parture. But what was most truly affecting, and which drew tears from the eyes of the two canons, Albanese and de Robertis, who were deputies from the chapter of St. Agatha, was to hear the venerable bishop ask to be allowed to take away his mattress and arm-chair as an alms. All that he wished for was granted; but however generous the gift might be, it was not one which could concern the chapter and the cathedral!

When he saw that the priests, canons, and gentlemen intended to follow him, he thanked them all, and assured them of his gratitude for this mark of their affection. However, four of the most distinguished of the canons were determined to accompany him, as well as Father Master Caputo and a great number of gentlemen, amongst whom was Don Salvadore Romano, who had the greatest attachment to his Lordship; but after they had gone on for some miles, that is to say, when they arrived at Cancello, Alphonso was anxious that they should return, and assured them that their presence only increased instead of relieving his distress. However, Treasurer Martinelli and some others would not yield to his entreaties, and accompanied him to Nocera.

He arrived at Nola at dinner time. As he was an enemy to ceremonials he did not get out at the bishop's palace, but went to the seminary. Canon Francis Crisci, who was the superior, and who felt the greatest veneration for him, welcomed him as a messenger from heaven.

Alphonso wished to say mass on his arrival; for he did not like to say it at Arienzo, on account of the emotion which his departure caused him to feel. He celebrated it then in presence of the whole seminary, although he was in a state of the greatest suffering and weakness. Every one shed tears of tenderness at seeing the devotion with which he celebrated the august sacrifice, without omitting the most minute rubric, notwithstanding his age and sufferings. When the mass had ended, Father Villani then commenced his, during which Alphonso made his thanksgiving. At the request of the canon he afterwards addressed an exhortation to all the pupils, and gave them his blessing. When Mgr. Liguori's arrival at the seminary became known at Nola, several gentlemen, amongst whom was D. Baptist Santoro, went to pay their respects to him, and God deigned to manifest the holiness of His servant through a miracle. D. Michael Menichino's sight had been so much weakened for upwards of a year, through inflammation, that he was no longer able to walk without being led. Divers remedies had been fruitlessly tried at Naples and at Nola; and the complaint got so much worse that he became at length completely blind. When he heard that Alphonso was in the seminary, he caused himself to be led to him, accompanied by the gentlemen of whom we have just spoken, as he was full of confidence in his power with God. He arrived just as his Lordship was going to get into his carriage; he threw himself at his feet, and

shedding tears, he entreated him to make the sign of the cross on his eyes. Alphonso was affected, and no sooner had he done that which he had asked than the blind man recovered his sight.

As soon as he entered the carriage again, Alphonso recommenced the recitation of the rosary with Father Villani, and the rest of the time, until they reached Nocera, was employed in saying office and other vocal prayers. When he arrived at Nocera, Mgr. Sanfelice, who had the greatest esteem for him, ordered that all the bells should ring out to welcome him. Great rejoicing was felt by the inhabitants of Pagani when they saw him once more in the midst of them. The state he was in, however, excited general compassion; but they especially shed tears of emotion in calling to mind the promises he had made on his leaving for St. Agatha thirteen years before, that he would come and end his days at Nocera. When he got out of his carriage he was surrounded by a crowd of people. All the clergy, and a great number of gentlemen, hastened to kiss his hand and to receive his blessing. When he was on the steps Alphonso exclaimed with transport, turning round towards Father Deodatus Criscuoli, "Gloria Patri, &c. The cross which I wear at my breast was very heavy when I ascended the staircase at Arienzo, but how light has it become to-day! Gloria Patri," &c. When he reached the choir, which is at the first landing-place of this staircase, he cast himself on his face before the Blessed Sacra-

ment, and was heard to say, "My God! I thank Thee for having released me from so great a burthen. My Jesus! I could endure it no longer."

Whilst this was going on our fathers sung a Te Deum, to thank God for having restored their common father to them. A comfortable little room was prepared for Alphonso, which had been set apart till then for the use of strangers; but when Father Mazzini conducted him there, he observed a piece of tapestry, with a kind of black border, which formed the ceiling, he exclaimed, "What, must I live in the midst of ornaments! I will have my old room."

He was told that Father Villani occupied it; but Alphonso would not yield. At length it was represented to him that he ought to have room for the visitors he would have to receive; this reason made him determine to take two other little rooms on the third floor, the one for his bed-room, and the other as a reception room. When he saw that he was lodged as the poor are, he joyfully said to the gentlemen who surrounded him, "Oh, how much better satisfied I am in this cell than in the palace at Arienzo!" Then looking at his little cross, and taking it in his hand, he repeated several times over, "This cross has become very light here; but there I sunk under its weight."

The grand-vicar of Nocera came to see him the same evening, to pay his respects to him as the deputy of Mgr. Sanfelice. Alphonso in the conversation he had with him, expressed

his happiness at being released from the weight of his Church: "I am released," said he, "from the mountain of Taburno, which rested on my shoulders." "I quite believe it," replied the grand-vicar; "but I think that the diocese is very much displeased at your departure." "And why?" his Lordship replied. "Because it has lost a pastor who did it much good," answered the grand-vicar. Alphonso was disturbed at these words. "Jesus and Mary," he exclaimed in great excitement, "what does the grand-vicar say of me, who have done no good at all, none, none, none? If any good has been done, it was Don Carlo de Marco who did it, and not me; or rather," he immediately added with emotion, "it was God, God alone who has done all."

Mgr. Sanfelice came to visit him himself next day; he also received visits from all the superiors of monasteries, from the nobles, and from all the people of rank of the neighbouring places in the diocese. Mgr. Sanfelice conferred full powers on him to exercise all authority in the diocese, by one word and in the most extended manner. The bishops and grand-vicars in the neighbourhood also went to see him, and the visits paid him were so numerous, that they prevented him from resting for several days. In a letter which he addressed to one of us on the same day he said, "By God's grace I am at Nocera at last, and I feel as if I were in Paradise."

It was thus that Alphonso rejoiced, but his joy was of short duration, for the life of the just is only an alternation of joy and pain. Our

adversaries never ceased to beset the royal court with calumnious petitions, and so the Marquis Tanucci published three ordinances on the 3rd of October of the same year; the first was addressed to Ferdinand de Leon, attorney of the junta of abuses; the second to the commissioner of the country, D. Blaise San Severino; and the third to Duke Furitto, attorney procurator of the royal council. All three contained the following injunction, namely, that after a compilation of all the proceedings and accusations in the council of St. Clare, in that of Sommaria, and in the royal council, the procurator Leon, with two other deputies, were to make their opinions known to his majesty, after having examined everything, and to transmit all the documents to the chief ministerial council.

This final determination made a general sensation, it encouraged our enemies, and to us it was like a thunderbolt.

Some very serious differences arose about this time between the courts of Naples and Rome. The expulsion of the Jesuits, which happened at the same period, confirmed the forebodings of our speedy suppression. The procurator listened to our enemies, who had already begun to glory in their triumph, and in the destruction of the missionaries. In fact, we had no other support to rest on than the piety of the prince and the protection of God. Alphonso was affected by hope and fear, but hope preponderated. "I am quite contented," he wrote to our fa-

thers at Naples, "because I feel sure that the Madonna will protect us during this storm."

During these critical circumstances Alphonso despaired of the aid of man, and therefore turned to God with redoubled fervour. He recommended himself to the prayers of several monasteries, and he wrote the following circular to all our houses on the 4th of November:

"My very dear brothers, redouble your fervour in prayer, for our enemies redouble their fury against us. I trust in prayer, which is all-powerful with God. Do not cease to pray, for if you neglect prayer our ruin is certain. If we pray, and act as we ought towards God, He will preserve us; if not, we shall assuredly be destroyed."

As he ardently desired that a daily increasing love towards Jesus Christ should be inculcated on the people through a continual remembrance of His passion, he exhorted each one to employ himself in so holy a work. "Now that the missions commence," said he, "do not omit constantly, in instructions, exercises, rosary, and sermons, &c., several times a day, to enforce love towards Jesus Christ, and specially towards Jesus Christ in His passion, as well as constant recurrence through prayer to Jesus and Mary in temptations.

"In the missions I also recommend purity of intention, obedience, and love of employments in which self-love has no advantage. Be careful not to offer up to God those works only which are pleasing to nature, such as sermons,

exercises, &c., but also such as are distasteful to it, and which do not require so much talent, such as the catechism, rosary, exhortations, confessions of men, of the sick and old, &c.; it is in these that merit is to be found. This is why I urge all to be very strict as to obedience, and I enjoin all superiors of missions to inform me about the subjects who commit any serious act of disobedience against them. I desire that the superior of missions shall be obeyed, as I should be obeyed were I present.

"That which I enjoin as to missions, I also enjoin as to the exercises which may be given in the houses, whether to strangers or to the community.

"My brothers, if we behave well God will preserve us; if not, He will assuredly destroy us. What pains me most is not the seeing one of you ill, or even leaving the congregation; I wish him well: it is to see him commit faults, especially against obedience or poverty; that rends my very heart.

"I bless you all one by one. Pray about the persecution which we endure, and which is more intense now than ever; but I trust in Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin, who will not abandon us. You must each of you pray daily for me, in order that I may have a happy death. For my part, I do nothing but pray for you, and care more for you than all my relations. May you be blessed, and blessed also be all the labours you shall perform in the houses and in the missions."

Alphonso had scarcely retired into the congregation ere he had cause to be satisfied with the kindness of the holy Father Pius VI. In the preparation of the letters for his pension the Pope remembered the services he had rendered to the Church, and wished that all should be sent to him gratis. "The great esteem his Holiness entertains for your Lordship," Cardinal Castelli wrote to him, "has caused him to free you from all expense for the composition and despatch of the letters. 'One cannot do enough for Mgr. Liguori,' said the Pope." Besides these expenses he ought also to have paid a hundred and five scudi to his successor, Mgr. Rossi, who had a right to retain them on the day when the first portion of his pension became due. The Pope wished to favour him in this also. "By a special grace of our holy Father," his agent, D. Melchior Terragnoli, wrote to him on the 1st of September, "this sum has been remitted to you." In a word, the holy Father was so fond of Alphonso that he even went out of his way to seek for opportunities of testifying his esteem and good-will towards him.

CHAPTER VI.

If Alphonso's mode of life at Arienzo was admirable and laborious, it was no less so at Nocera. He thought that he might then enjoy some relaxation, but he was only relieved from

the burthen of the episcopate in order to bear that of the congregation; for formerly its government was at least divided between him and Father Villani, and Alphonso was only applied to on weighty matters, whilst now all had recourse to their common father, and left him no longer at rest. "I had hoped to find relief at Nocera," he wrote to Father Majone on the 26th of January, 1776, "but I have met with a thousand thorns which deprive me of all rest. God be praised! My head is exhausted, and I am forced to have a wet cloth constantly beside me to prevent giddiness or fainting, through the number of letters I have to write. Your Reverence will say that it would be better for me not to write any more letters; but what can I do? I am superior once more. If I were not, I would leave them to others; but as I am so, I feel scrupulous in neglecting to write the inspirations which God gives me, for God gives knowledge to superiors which He does not grant to others, and it is this thought which makes me write so many letters.

Alphonso found his congregation greatly cast down by the numerous persecutions of its enemies, and many had thereby lost the strength of mind which animated them at first. If a hail-storm does not uproot the vine, it however injures it, and renders it less fertile. The vicissitudes of persecution and the fear which the subjects daily had of being turned out of their houses, threw them into great perplexity, and even though they did not therefore quit the congre-

gation, they were ill at ease in remaining in it, and each one was continually planning for the future. This discouragement inflicted a severe wound on the heart of Alphonso. From the time of his return he endeavoured to excite them all to have recourse to the protection of Heaven, and to confide in the Blessed Virgin. "Persecutions are to the works of God," said he, "what hail is to plants in winter; far from hurting them, it helps them to put forth deeper roots, and renders them more fruitful. There is nothing but the worm which can injure plants. The worms which we ought to avoid are faults and voluntary failures; let us amend ourselves, and God will not fail to protect us. Let us not form chimerical projects, they are so many snares of the devil to cause us to depreciate our vocation. One breach of rule gives me more pain than all the persecutions. Let us kiss the walls of our cells, and in proportion to the amount of our persecutions, let us keep all the more closely united to Jesus Christ." He never omitted to drag himself to the chapel every Saturday, to assist at the chapter regarding offences, and to animate his sons to greater perfection. He inculcated the duties of the rule with fervour, and especially spoke of particular virtues, whose most minute beauties he caused to be felt. "Why are we in the congregation," he one day said, "if it is not in order to become saints? The end which God has in view in delivering us from the world, is our sanctification; if this had not been His intention, He would

have left us in the midst of its dangers." He constantly called to mind that the end of the institute is zeal for the salvation of souls, and he especially urged us not to betray our true mission when preaching, by the use of expressions ill suited to the apostolic ministry. One Saturday, among others, he expatiated on this point in particular more than usual. "I have heard that you make panegyrics, and I am sorry for it; do away with this word panegyrics, and call them discourses or sermons, and tell those who invite you to make them that we do not preach panegyrics. What profit is derived from them, and who understands them when they are made in the manner now in fashion? Call them sermons, and fill the people with love for the virtues of the saints, whose praises you set forth." Father Cajone, who was present, told me that he spoke so animatedly on the subject, that he caused them all to think seriously about it. As he had made a vow to preach on the glories of the Blessed Virgin every Saturday, and as we celebrated that same day with benediction and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in our church, Alphonso, who burned with the desire of seeing the Mother and her Divine Son honoured, did not fail to be conducted to the church by the lay-brother and his servant on the Saturday after his arrival, though they had the greatest difficulty in placing him in the pulpit. As soon as he appeared before the people, who had hastened in crowds to hear him, they all uttered a cry of compassion; they wept at seeing this old

man broken down by infirmities, but they rejoiced at seeing the prophecy he had made of coming to die amongst them thus verified. He preached as if he had been quite well, and he afterwards did the same on all Saturdays. He was always most circumspect regarding the holy virtue of chastity, and as he saw that the people pressed round him when he went to church, he took care to wrap his handkerchief round his hand to prevent women from kissing it. At Nocera, as well as at Arienzo, a constant concourse of persons of distinction, of priests and of monks, hastened to be directed by his counsels. All the bishops who went to Naples, or returned from thence, made a point of consulting him on their own necessities, and on those of their dioceses.

Mgr. Guttilieri, the confessor to the queen, and Mgr. San Severino, confessor to the king, very often went to see him in order that they might profit by his advice. Ladies of rank and chevaliers did the same. Amongst others, were seen the Duchesses of Bovino, of Cesarini, of Caracciolo, the Princess of Palmo, and many others. I will not speak of ministers and magistrates, I will only cite the Marquis of Avena, counsellor to the king and minister of the royal council of St. Clare. He went to converse with his Lordship several times a year on his spiritual necessities and on the duties of his office.

There is a congregation of priests at Pagani, or in other words in the town of Nocera, who are no less flourishing than zealous, who have

the honour of God and the salvation of souls at heart, and therefore devote themselves to the apostolical ministry. They give missions whenever they are asked to do so. Besides the exercises of Lent they also know how to distribute the bread of the divine word to the poor, and attend daily in the confessional. These priests were devoted admirers of Alphonso's holiness, and wished often to have him in the midst of them, in order to obtain a constantly increasing fervour through his exhortations. One day when he was conversing with them on holy purity, he said to them, "Even I, old as I am, am obliged to walk with my eyes down in merely coming from St. Michael's, in order to prevent temptation against holy virtue. Some put no control over their eyes, and then they wonder that they are tempted."

The nuns also wished to hear his instructions, and Alphonso did not fail to visit them from time to time; his presence alone served to touch their hearts. When he arrived at Nocera, he effected in the asylum called the Carminello what several confessors had uselessly attempted. Two females, who were consecrated to God, were living there in a state of scandalous enmity; but one of them, upon merely seeing him, humbled herself, and ran and cast herself at the feet of her enemy, and they both asked each other's forgiveness for their offences, and embraced each other with all charity. On another day he comforted both the religious and the mother prioress of the convent. The latter requested to see Alphonso,

and asked him to remember her in his prayers in order that he might obtain for her the cure of a cancer which she had in her left breast, and which the doctors looked upon as incurable. His Lordship encouraged her to bear it patiently: "Even if your malady gets so much worse as to reduce you to the last extremity," he said to her, "you must not distress yourself; place yourself in the hands of God, and embrace the cross; you will thus please Jesus Christ, and your pain will become easier." When he returned to the house Alphonso compassionated the sufferings of the religious, and sent her a bottle of pure water, telling her to bathe the diseased part with it; after the mother prioress had done so, the tumour disappeared, to her great consolation, and that of all the nuns.

Always faithful to his cherished poverty, Alphonso manifested it even in his retirement at Nocera; his two little rooms offered an admirable proof of it; and they also betokened his love and tenderness for our blessed Saviour and His divine Mother. In the one he destined to be his oratory, a large crucifix was to be found on the altar, which had been given to him by Father Don Francis Longobardi; at the foot of this crucifix there was a very beautiful figure of Blessed Mary, placed between two others of the Divine Shepherd and the Blessed Virgin with the Holy Ghost on her breast. From morning till evening was Alphonso to be seen seated before these objects of his devotion; he made his exercises of piety there, and occupied him-

self in the composition of his works. The room was also adorned by German figures which represented the different mysteries of the Passion on a large scale, so that wherever he turned his eyes they met with objects which served to gratify his fervour. This room had no other ornaments: three or four straw chairs and a little table formed its whole furniture. He had also, however, the roughly made arm-chair which he had received as an alms at St. Agatha. The chair was covered with some old damask silk which the grand-vicar and others had obliged Alphonso to keep whilst he was at Arienzo; but at Nocera this stuff although torn was a great pain to Alphonso, and as it inflicted a wound on his love of poverty, he several times declared to Father Villani, that he could not endure it, and so at last he had it taken off the chair and re-covered it with leather.

His bed-room was ornamented with the same kind of pictures as his other room. There was a figure of our Lady of Sorrows opposite to his bed, and a large wooden cross. Around this figure there were also others to be seen representing the mysteries of the Passion. At the head of the bed, he had one of St. Michael, besides a figure of our Lady of Power, of St. Margaret of Cortona, and of the seraphic St. Buonaventure of Potenza.

The carriage he used was in such a bad condition that it was in danger of breaking down by the way. When the Duchesses of Caracciolo and of Bovino came to Nocera with

Alphonso's niece, Donna Theresa, his servant Alexis showed them in what a bad state the wood of this carriage was in, and begged them to ask their nephew, Don Joseph, to see if he had an old carriage, and to send it to his uncle. It was thus Alphonso got a better equipage. As to the horses which were worn out through old age, and were also broken-winded and ill-trained, they could scarcely get on at all. Once one of them fell down, (no rare occurrence,) and the servant ran to raise it; when the horse in getting up nearly crushed him against the wall. The servant then spoke to Alphonso, and said to him, "My Lord, if you wish me to continue to serve you, you must either sell your carriage, or change your horses."

The doctors, as well as Father Villani, wished him to take a short airing daily, in order to prolong his days. The expense which this caused displeased Alphonso very much, and thinking it a superfluity, he did all he could to get the doctor's permission to give it up. "If you wish to do without it, consult others, and not me," said the doctor Donatus Anthony Pignataro to him one day, half angrily, "for I dare not in conscience allow you to do it." The poor were Alphonso's privileged friends at Nocera also. After he had paid the wages of his servant and of his coachman, and for what the keep of his horses and own miserable nourishment cost, he gave all the rest to the poor. Brother Michael Hilary has assured me that a

lady of rank at Naples was in great want, and exposed her indigence to Alphonso, who gave her fifty ducats. The servant Alexis was unable to place one of his daughters as a lay-sister in the convent at St. Agatha, but Alphonso, who perceived that she had a real desire to devote herself to God, gave her fifty-seven ducats. He also gave his sister forty ducats to enable her to marry. The same servant has declared that he received from him more than two hundred ducats in his various necessities.

Alphonso was as cruel towards himself as he was tender towards the poor. His ardour in mortifying himself excited the admiration of all of us. Forgetting that he was laden with infirmities, he was continually weeping and groaning to Father Villani at not doing penance. He would have liked to discipline himself on the days appointed for it by the rule, but how could he do it, he who required assistance in getting up and in standing upright?

The reading of pious books, meditation, and prayer, were so delightful to him at Nocera, even more so than at Arienzo, so that his life may be said to have been nothing but a constant walking with God. Every one was astonished at seeing him go through all the exercises of the community, and much more besides. He recited the little hours after his morning meditation, he said mass, for which he had made previous preparation, made his thanksgiving, and examined his conscience before din-

ner. In the afternoon, when his short period of repose had ended, he went through his spiritual reading, which was followed by a meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ; he then paid a visit to the blessed Sacrament, which he would make in the church, notwithstanding the difficulty he experienced in getting thither, or rather in being dragged there from the third floor where he lived; it often lasted for many hours; he resumed meditation after six o'clock, and recited matins with one of us; he then performed the way of the cross, not in his chair as at Arienzo, but by going to the different stations in a long corridor. Before he went to bed, he said night prayers and made an examination of conscience; during the spare moments of the day, he occupied himself by reading the books which had recently appeared in defence of religion, and in composing his own works.

CHAPTER VII.

Alphonso put the finishing stroke to his book on Divine Providence, that is to say, on the economy of the redemption of man, the year of his arrival at Nocera. It is impossible to read this work without being affected, and without being excited to love God, who became man through love. "His sentiments," said Canon Don Joseph Rossi, "are so many powerful motives which lead us to love Jesus Christ, and

which fill timid souls with trust in Divine mercy."

He added two treatises to this work; the first was on the love of God, and the methods of acquiring it; the second contained divers counsels fitted to encourage a soul in desolation. The same canon could not sufficiently admire Alphonso's zeal, which neither his great age nor all his sufferings had in the least abated. Mgr. Cervone, who was at that time royal professor, admired this work quite as much. "Although there are a multitude of books written on devotion," he said to his Majesty, "yet the works of Mgr. Liguori surpass all others, as much as he himself excels them in piety."

At this same time, when the press brought to light the extravagant reform which was attempted to be introduced into the Church by Abbé Rolli, a priest of Calabria, and an enemy of the devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Alphonso did not fail to oppose him in order to defend the privileges of the Mother of God. The abbé found fault with the titles applied to her of Turris Davidica and eburnea, and Domus aurea, which he called affected and ridiculous expressions, as well as those of Speculum justitiæ, Refugium peccatorum, Janua cæli and Stella matutina. He wanted her litanies to be abolished, and he sacrilegiously went so far as to say that nothing but blind respect or party spirit, could cause the titles of a similar sort contained in the Salva Regina to be defended. Alphonso was so shocked at such great impiety, that although

Ildefonso Cardona, a minim monk, had refuted these impostures at length, he wished to attack him again by means of some other arguments, and with him Lamindo Britannico, of whose name Abbé Rolli wished to take advantage. "I am determined," said he, "to write these few pages, from seeing that Abbé Rolli wishes to throw discredit on the devout prayers and titles commonly given to the Blessed Virgin by the faithful in the litanies and in the Salve Regina, as well as from hearing him call the scapular and the rosary childish devotions; whereas they are most religious practices and have been dear to me from my earliest infancy."

Alphonso was full of gratitude to the holy Father Pius VI., and profited by this opportunity of testifying it to him, by dedicating to him his work on Divine Providence, which he sent to him together with his last writings. "I humbly present to your Holiness," he wrote to him in the month of November, "this little work which I have composed in my old age, and which is probably the last I shall write; for my head has begun to fail me for the last four or five months. I beseech your Holiness to correct it if you find anything in it you dislike, and to bestow your blessing on me and it, if you think it will be useful to the faithful."

Pius VI. accepted this little present, and testified his satisfaction to him by a brief of the 19th of the same month. "We have received your two works with the very greatest pleasure, wherein one sees your zeal for virtue shine forth

most admirably together with your sacred knowledge; these are fresh motives to cause us to increase our paternal love for you, and which arises from your virtues and merits; be fully persuaded therefore that whatever we have hitherto done in your favour, is only an earnest of our good-will, which we are ready to evince towards you on every opportunity to the utmost of our power."

Alphonso was overwhelmed by so much kindness, and hastened to offer his most humble thanks to the holy Father, and Pius VI., who was sensible of his gratitude, replied to him in a new brief, dated the 16th of December, 1776, saying that his thanks were superfluous, both as regarded the augmentation of his pension, and also as to the dues which were remitted to him, as he had overpaid for all by the present of his works. "Nothing could have been more acceptable to us than this present, for which we are as grateful to you as if you had sent us a gift of great value in the eyes of the world. We have looked over these works rapidly, and we promise you to read them attentively as soon as we are at leisure. They are a fresh and convincing proof to us of your indefatigable zeal in feeding the flock of Jesus Christ as far as lies in your power; so that although you have resigned the episcopate, you have not however renounced the solicitude and duties of a bishop.

"As to the protection of our Apostolic See, which you implore for the Congregation of the Holy Redeemer, you cannot ask us for anything

which is more just, and I will never refuse it to you, whose piety we delight in acknowledging, nor to your congregation."

We have also another production of Alphonso's after his return to Nocera; it is on the victories which the most celebrated martyrs of the Church gained over their tyrants. This work comprises two parts; in the first he makes some introductory reflections calculated to show the fruit which may be derived from reading of these conflicts. He extols the virtues which these martyrs practised under their sufferings, exposing in detail the divers kinds of tortures made use of against them, and which have been collected together in the authentic acts of their martyrdom; the second part contains the history of those later martyrs who have given their lives for Jesus Christ in Japan. He then concludes by a treatise on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross and on the altar, and by a short explanation of the prayers used at mass.

He composed this work when in great suffering. In a letter which he wrote to Father Landi on the 15th of November he said to him, "I have a catarrh, like those which I usually have, and which have several times brought me to the brink of the grave; but I am in peace, and I await death without terror." This book was much talked of at Naples. Canon Fabius Massa declares that amongst the numerous works which Alphonso published none have perhaps been more useful to the Church, "for nothing can be better adapted to strengthen faith," said he, "and to rekindle piety, specially in these latter days of calamity."

CHAPTER VIII.

The procurator advocate allowed himself to be persuaded by our enemies, and they also succeeded in acting on the mind of the prime minister, by means of intrigues; so much success filled them with pride, and they loudly proclaimed that the congregation was destroyed. "The casuistical tribe is extirpated," they exclaimed. "We can now see," said others, "what this Liguori is, and what kind of people he has for disciples." Such was the presumptuous language of our enemies. Notwithstanding his great courage, Alphonso himself confessed, that humanly nothing good was to be hoped for; he even foresaw the torments which would assail us, when he heard that the cause had been placed in the hands of the procurator advocate, for he had already said, that the congregation was useless. "O my God!" Alphonso wrote to Father Gejano, "we have been of use up to this time, and upwards of forty-four years we have aided the souls of so many poor shepherds and villagers in the mountains of Calabria, in Abruzzi, and the Basilicate as well as in la Pouille, and now we have become useless and hurtful!" As pilots, even though very experienced ones, feel their courage shaken when they find themselves in the midst of rocks, and beaten about by tempests, so our advocates and the other magistrates

on our side looked upon our cause as a desperate one when they saw it in the hands of the three persons of whom we have spoken. In these critical circumstances, we were all very anxious to see Alphonso at Naples. Father Majone solicited him to come, and the poor old man was distressed at it. "Your Reverence," he answered to him on the 26th of January, 1776, "has again written to tell me that it would be a good plan were I to come and speak to the Marquis of Tanucci; but you well know that I am no longer fit for anything. Last night I suffered from my asthma, and had such palpitations of the heart, that I thought I should have died. Yes, certainly, my Father, I am ready to give my life to prevent the destruction of this work of God, but it would require an extreme necessity to justify my placing it in evident peril, and that would be the case now." In fact he was in a state which caused great fears to be entertained for his life; and the apprehension of this misfortune afflicted us much more than the menaces of the procurator. Alphonso saw the cause of our uneasiness. "Fear nothing," he said to us, "I shall not die yet, God wills that I shall die a subject, and not chief superior of the congregation." He had also predicted this same degradation to Father Villani in the year 1774, and unhappily the result made us understand but too well that he had indeed prophesied.

Our adversaries themselves, on seeing Alphonso's impaired health, predicted his speedy death,

and everywhere said, that if the congregation were not forced to come to an end through the weight of their accusations, it would at least become extinct with the life of Mgr. Liguori. When the sad state of Alphonso's health became known at Scifelli and at Frosinone, as well as the angry prognostications of our persecutors, these two houses were quite discouraged by it. "Do they say," Alphonso wrote to them, "that when I die all will be ended; I say, for my part, that this congregation, which is not my work, but that of God, will endure after my death as it has done for forty-four years. Why should the king of Naples cause it to be dissolved? It has wronged no one; it possesses no revenues of its own; it is received with acclamations by all the bishops, and, (which is of more consequence,) the Catholic King himself wills by his decree, that our society shall endure not only during the life of Alphonso Liguori, but while it shall continue the work of the missions with primitive fervour. Our preservation rests with God, and after that on the manner in which we may conduct ourselves. Let us therefore be attentive in keeping ourselves united to God, in observing our rule, in being charitable towards all, and being resigned to our misfortunes; but let us chiefly practise humility, because a little pride will suffice to destroy us, as it has so many others. I entreat your Reverence to be humble and affable to every one, especially during mission times, and to be charitable towards our brothers

who are in misery far from their country and their parents; for this reason they ought to be treated with the greatest charity."

While things went on thus, some people proposed to his Lordship to render the houses independant, like those of the fathers of the Oratory; others, that he should open seminaries for the education of youth, and that they should also be engaged in preaching Lenten discourses. The following was Alphonso's reply: "Evangelizare pauperibus misit nos Deus. The fathers of St. Philip do good in large towns, but if we try to imitate them in the small populations where we are placed, the congregation will be destroyed." He rejected the proposition of preaching Lents with horror. "The declamatory air of these preachers," said he, "and above all, preaching in large towns, is calculated to form tinkling cymbals rather than good subjects; they will not produce fruit and may cause evil. God's will is that we should preach in an apostolical manner wherever we are, and that is what has made our mission succeed."

However, everything appeared to conspire against us; Alphonso's doctrine was again attacked. "If these new Jesuits are not expelled," said our enemies, "there will be an end of faith and of morals. As the former are banished from every kingdom, so these latter must also disappear from amongst us." Every thing about us breathed of laxity, error, and malice, according to them; all was opposed to the Gospel; all was destructive to Church and

State. Ignorant people who did not even know moral theology, took upon themselves to become doctors, and everywhere scoffed at Alphonso's doctrine, by attributing opinions to him of which he had never dreamt; in short, Mgr. Liguori, the oracle of the kingdom of Naples and of foreign kingdoms, the reformer of morals and the scourge of the unbelieving, was spoken of as if he were a dangerous man to both Church and State.

The blows did not miss their aim. Our enemies were favoured by one of the chief functionaries in the royal ministry, who was all the more eager for our ruin, as it was for his own advantage. These accusations could not fail to make an impression on the mind of the Marquis of Tanucci, who attached the greatest importance to the maintenance of the integrity of sound morality.

"The maxims which are spread about," said he, "are, whether true or false, the foundation of public morals." Now it was on this very point that our enemies accused us, and the Marquis, who was persuaded by persons whose testimony he could not doubt, and who was also prejudiced by all the other calumnies he heard against us, declared that our cause should not be discussed in the royal council, but that it should be rigorously examined in the juncta of abuses. This decision, which was a signal of triumph to our adversaries, was like an insurmountable barrier to us. Alphonso himself appeared to be disconcerted by it. "The very

name of the tribunal," he wrote to our fathers at Naples, "is enough to throw discredit on us. Try and find some method of addressing a fresh petition to the king, that the case may be referred to the council; however, I think that every petition would be rejected at present. Speak about it to the advocates; it would be good if we could at least present some petition in order to gain time, for our enemies are in a hurry to see us entirely destroyed. But we have God with us, and I place my confidence in Him and in the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is all powerful with Him."

Father Majone informed him of all that had taken place, and he replied to him on the 25th of January, 1776: "I received your good news this morning; I say good, to make us resigned to the will of God. If they come to pass, we shall have no other hope than God, who is more powerful than Tanucci and all the others. I trust in God, but I do not wish to neglect human means. In despair of the cause, see if M. Vivenzio cannot obtain for us the protection of the queen, through his brother. I hear that the princess of Cariati can do a great deal with the queen, from being governess to her daughters." Alphonso also wrote to Mgr. Guttiliera, the queen's confessor, and sent a father from Nocera to speak to the Princess of Ottajano. As he also had recourse to Cardinal Banditi to get him to intercede with the queen, he also sent an express to Benevento, in order to know the result of his proceedings. "If the tidings

are confirmed," he wrote to Father Majone, "I think that I shall apply to Mgr. Bergamo, to aid me in this extreme necessity. It would also be well to apply to Mgr. Testa, and to inform him of the ruin which menaces us, in order that he may speak to the Marquis of Tanucci on our behalf. He will at least be always able to give us some advice, and you can tell him that it is time for him to come to our assistance."

In full confidence that God would not abandon his congregation, he wished that twelve carlins should be sent to the nuns at Naples who are called the Thirty-Three, in order that they might say a novena for us to the Blessed Virgin. He wrote in the same spirit to all our houses and to a great number of monasteries. Many seculars even, who were interested about us, did not fail to implore God to preserve us, they distributed alms, and had masses said for us. When this news reached Frosinone, the subjects of this house were plunged into sorrow. In order to cheer them, Alphonso wrote to them on the 4th of February, 1776, "It is true," said he, "that hell is let loose, and that it makes every effort to destroy us; but God is on our side, and He will not permit this work, which is wholly His, to be destroyed. Nothing can injure us but our own faults. Let us be faithful to God, and God will protect us. Prayers are our weapons of defence; they have always defended us, let us continue to pray in common after the examination in the evening and at mass. Prayer is all powerful if it is joined to

observance of rule. Draw the bonds of fraternal charity more closely together; shrink from wilful failures; trust in God; and Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin will not fail to console us."

The houses in the Papal States were in affliction; but those in the kingdom were in still greater misery. The terror which our enemies inspired by what they said, was so great that they were in constant fear of being suppressed. The inmates of our house at St. Angelo de Cupoli, received amongst others such accounts that they passed one night on foot; those at Iliceto were in a state of similar uneasiness. If they saw two police officers approaching together, even though at a distance, they felt as if they had already received an order to quit. However, as our houses in the kingdom were not accused of any manifest crimes, our enemies feared that their allegations would not be sufficiently strong to overthrow us; they therefore carried their calumnies so far as to accuse us of having carried money belonging to the kingdom into the Papal States, as if this were an established fact. This accusation was also of great weight with the Marquis of Tanucci; and it was no sooner made than commissioners were sent with urgent despatches, containing orders to go throughout the houses in the Papal States to make inquiries about the purchases of property we had made there, according to our enemies, and they went so far as even to corrupt the inferior agents by means of money. This last blow seemed as if

it would complete our ruin; but they could not obtain their end, for if our houses in the kingdom were poor, those in the Papal States were no less so.

This mass of imposture disconcerted our advocates, who had not foreseen this ground of accusation. Yet Alphonso thought this the principal grievance, and the only one which could hurt us. "I am much afraid," he wrote on the 26th of January, to Father Majone, "that God wishes to chastise us and to destroy us, for I see that things go on badly. It seems to me that we must justify ourselves before Tanucci regarding the acquisition, as soon as possible, and that we must labour unceasingly for this. Whilst Tanucci is persuaded that we have acquired possessions contrary to the decrees of his Catholic Majesty, we shall only sail against the wind, for Tanucci will always look on us as transgressors, and in that case, what good can we hope for? It is I believe through this false impression that so many despatches have been issued against us."

Meanwhile Cardinal Sersale was one of those who undertook our defence with the most devotion. As the calumny regarding the acquisition had not been sufficiently formally contradicted, the cardinal who heard it stated did not know what to reply. "Our misfortune," Alphonso wrote to Father Majone, "arises from our enemies alone having been heard on this point, for we have not yet said anything to justify ourselves. The president himself believes

us guilty, as he told the cardinal, and the poor cardinal did not know what to reply. His Eminence wishes to support us, and to speak to Tanucci, but he must be informed of all the answers to the general as well as to the particular accusations. I am ready to write to Mgr. Guttileri; but before that it will be necessary for the cardinal to have spoken to the queen."

Some people imagine that the procurator, after having presented his report to the king, might return to our side. "If you wish to wait until after the report of the attorney Leon, before speaking to Tanucci," Alphonso wrote to the same father, "I will not obstinately oppose it; but by speaking to Tanucci before the report I do not see how a decree could be published against us, as you say that the three ministers who constitute the juncta make their report together. I do not intend to be obstinate, and I yield, although it is by compulsion, but I fear that all this will cause us some fresh disaster; whereas if were to speak now, and if it were known that we had made some impression on Tanucci's mind, the attorney Leon and N. N. might give up their animosity. I am afraid it is the devil who strives to prevent Tanucci's being spoken to." During this time, a return of unexpected good fortune, or rather a dispensation of Providence occurred, which gave us courage, without however lessening that of our adversaries. The king allowed the Marquis of Tanucci to retire on the 16th of October, 1776, and the Marquis of Sambuca was made prime-minister. While

the former had been favourably inclined to our enemies, the Marquis of Sambuca, on the contrary, was on our side, and had the most favourable opinion of Alphonso. This change of scene did not please our enemies, and was still more displeasing to the procurator attorney. However, he did not lose courage, as he relied on his credit with the juncta of abuses.

CHAPTER IX.

In the midst of his distresses Alphonso profited by the smallest leisure time at his disposal, to labour for the salvation of souls and the good of religion. Notwithstanding these harassing circumstances, his mind was calm, and did not appear to be disturbed by anything. After he had adopted all the measures which prudence could suggest to him, he placed his trust in God, and however furious the tempest became he still reposed with tranquillity in the bosom of the Most High.

When he had finished his book on the "Triumphs of the Martyrs," he undertook another, which was no less interesting. As there was no lack of incredulous persons who wished to act like free-thinkers, and who therefore designated eternal truths, such as the resurrection, judgment, hell, and such like, as mere fables, Alphonso again attacked them in 1776, in a dogmatical dissertation. He therein set forth

each of these dogmas in all its parts on the authority of Scripture, of the holy fathers, and of theologians; he also there treats of private judgment, purgatory, and Antichrist, and mentions the signs of the end of the world, as well as the circumstances attendant on the resurrection and last judgment. He also speaks of the state of the world after judgment, of that of the damned, and of that of the blessed. In the chapter on universal judgment, he speaks of infants who have died without baptism, and refutes the opinion of some who assert that they are saved by the faith of their parents. He compresses the whole into one small volume in the vulgar tongue, in order that it might be more easily understood, and to facilitate its sale.

Canon Don Salvadore Ruggiero could not sufficiently admire the piety of this work. "One cannot," said he, "give enough praise to this prelate whose ardent zeal in procuring the good of souls, is too well known to render it necessary to speak of it now. As he can no longer occupy himself in preaching for the salvation of his neighbour, on account of his great age and infirmities, he endeavours to do all the good in his power by means of his writings."

Alphonso had to endure some opposition from the ecclesiastical examiner at Naples, on account of this work.

In the ninth dissertation he maintained that there is no difference between the love of the blessed in heaven, and that of the souls while on earth. He had imbibed this doctrine from

St. Thomas, and he was very anxious to spread it amongst the faithful, for the greater consolation of good souls. When Alphonso found that he was opposed on this point, and that the examiner did not hold his opinion, he did not fail to defend himself. "When an author's proposition," he wrote to him, "can be explained in a good sense, why reject it? You said that the love of souls upon earth is not the same as the love of the souls of the blessed. I have met with no one who treats on this point so clearly as Father Suarez, and he declares that it is a common opinion amongst theologians, including the Master of the Sentences, and St. Thomas, that love in this life of exile, is the same as in our heavenly country, because the formal object of love, namely, the Divine goodness, known in a supernatural manner, is the same with regard to souls who are still upon earth, as in the case of those now in heaven. Perhaps it will be objected to me, that accidental love becomes perfect in heaven; I answer that accidental love becomes perfect there, but that essential love is the same, because the formal cause of love, which is God, is the same."

After having established his opinion still more by means of divers passages from St. Thomas, he adds, "The essential perfection of love consists in the adhesion of the soul to God; and the accidental perfection consists in its having greater intensity and its being purified from all defects." He then yielded to his humility in order to preclude any ambiguity, and changed

the passage into the one which is to be met with in this same work. "It seems to me," he goes on to say, "that all ambiguity disappears when changed in this manner. However, if you were to point out all the passages which might be misinterpreted even in the most exact authors, you would find a thousand propositions which could not stand."

He was also attacked on another point in the sixth dissertation, where he examines if children who have died without baptism suffer the pain of sense as well as that of loss. He quotes St. Thomas's opinion on this subject, that is to say, that they will be free from both the one and the other; but he does not dwell upon it, because St. Augustine maintains the contrary. In speaking of St. Thomas, he says, "He is of opinion," &c., and in speaking of St. Augustine, "He maintains strongly," &c. Instead of *strongly*, the examiner wanted him to write *with good ground*, and here lay the difficulty. "I have written," he replied to the examiner, "that St. Augustine strongly maintains the contrary opinion. Your Reverence has changed it, and substituted that he demonstrates it by well-founded reasons. I have not wished to defend the opinion of St. Thomas, and therefore I have simply cited it, without pointing out the numerous authorities among the holy fathers who are in its favour, nor all the difficulties which are opposed to the doctrine of St. Augustine. To make me say that St. Augustine proves the contrary opinion, is just to make me oppose St. Thomas, and to

get me to say that his opinion is evidently false, which would be to make me tell an untruth, because I should assert an opinion contrary to that which I hold; but I would rather have my head cut off than tell a lie. I have begged Don Benedict Cervone to obtain an alteration of the following proposition for me, viz., *proves by well-grounded reasons;* otherwise one could also say that St. Augustine *holds for certain and maintains as invincible* the sentiment he advances; I entreat you not to try to make me tell a lie. How can I say that St. Augustine proves it, when I cannot succeed in persuading myself that St. Thomas maintains a false opinion? I pray and beseech you not to keep me any longer in uneasiness. It has already lasted nearly two months."

The examiner would not yield, and as Alphonso could not go to Naples to speak to him in person, as he had done at other times in former years, he applied for the mediation of Canon Simeoli, and referred it to the decision of his grace the archbishop. "I have written to the examiner three times," said he to Simeoli, "to show him St. Thomas's doctrine which he disputes about. I repeat it; I will not arrange with him, nor depend on him; I wish to depend on the archbishop, and I will do as the archbishop shall order. This doctrine of St. Thomas's is publicly taught at Naples even in the college of St. Thomas; but M. N. asserts that it cannot be granted. Well, I will do what the archbishop commands me. Oppose St.

Thomas! It is a thing which has filled the Dominicans with astonishment. Strange indeed! the opinion of St. Thomas cannot be admitted! Who says so? Holy Church? Holy Church! nay; for the Church venerates the doctrine of St. Thomas. I wish only to depend on the archbishop. If he gives me another examiner, if he allows me the doctrine of St. Thomas, or if he does not grant it, I will do what he may tell me, and I will be patient."

His opinion in favour of St. Thomas prevailed, and the dispute was thus terminated.

A voluminous collection of his literary dissertations might have been made, and they would have formed a compendium of theological matters of great interest in controversies of this kind; but we have to regret that Alphonso did not preserve any of them. Alphonso was very ill when he published this work. "I feel very ill," he wrote to Father Cajone, at the commencement of the year 1777; "I cannot now either read or write; I am troubled with a constant headache, and I have been obliged to give up all kind of study." Some time afterwards, he wrote a letter of congratulation to Don Benedict Cervone, who had been elected bishop of Aquila. "Your Lordship," said he to him, "has passed into a state which no longer admits of your being the examiner of my works, just at the very time when I have got into a state in which I am no longer fit to have them printed."

CHAPTER X.

In the month of November in the year after his return to Nocera, Alphonso addressed the following circular to all the houses, as he was full of solicitude that the great work of the missions should not suffer any injury, but be maintained in its former fervour. This letter contains a summary of all that could either injure or further the missions. Notwithstanding his great age, his impaired health, and anxieties without number, the glory of God, and the salvation of souls were always present in his mind, for he cared for nothing else. "My fathers and my brothers in Jesus Christ," said he, addressing us all, "you see how very grievous the circumstances are in which we are placed. We are opposed by such powerful enemies, that if God does not protect us, the congregation will be destroyed. This is all the work of the devil, who wishes for the destruction of this great work of the missions, which makes too much war against him; but all hell put together cannot hurt us if we are faithful to Jesus Christ, and I most earnestly exhort you to be so. As you must soon resume the missions, I think that I ought to remind you of some counsels, no less for your own advantage than for that of souls. If we preserve the work, the work will preserve us.

"Let the superior of the mission be nominated by the rector of the house when the latter does not go himself, and let him fix on whoever he thinks best qualified, without paying attention to seniority. Let him who is superior be foremost in keeping the rule properly. Let him not select the highest offices for himself, but those for which he is the fittest. Let him be the first to rise in the morning, and after he has said his prayers, let him be careful to assemble the fathers together, that all may repair to the church together; let him act towards the subjects with all charity and good-will.

"The chapter for offences must never be omitted during missions. Let the superior punish notable defects, even if he is thereby compelled to send the erring subject back to the house; he must especially punish faults against obedience, and make his report to me or to the father who is vicar-general; such subjects injure the missions.

"During mission time, novenas, and other exercises, visits must not be paid to women, even under the pretext of God's glory, except it may be to the principal lady of the place, whom the superior may visit, accompanied by another father.

"Our fathers must not speak to women out of the confessional, except in reply to some short question; they must be far more careful to avoid speaking with them alone at the monastery, and if it should happen to be necessary to converse with any one of them, it must

only be done in church with all the decency and circumspection needful to insure the honour of the missionary.

"When any reconciliation is in question, let no part be taken for any one, but act as mere mediators; if reason is clearly on one side, it is right to state this and to make the truth known.

"While on mission, as in the house, let each one abstain from assisting at wills or treaties of marriage, unless it be in order to take away a scandal or occasion of sin. When there is a crowd in church, the confessions of men must first be heard and then those of women, specially on Sundays and days of obligation.

"I desire that during missions, neither linen nor any other article be received as a gift under any pretext, even when no use is made of it during the time of the mission.

"Let the ancient custom regarding the quality of dishes be observed. I forbid gifts of birds, fowls, valuable fish, and such like, to be accepted, as well as all sorts of pastry; notwithstanding the solicitations that may be made by persons to whom we owe respect. Example and exact observance of rule does more good in such cases, than sermons. No indemnification from parishes, nor any invitations from the priests or any other person, whether secular or ecclesiastical, must be received, the bishop must be obeyed however, if he gives an invitation to dinner, but for once only.

"Persons of the place must not be allowed to

serve at table, and care must above all be taken not to admit any one whatever at that time, except it were a particular benefactor or person of high rank, and then let there be reading during the meat, if it be the day of the general communion.

"In the sermons and instructions always speak respectfully of every one, particularly of ecclesiastics and gentlemen: whenever a priest wishes to go to confession, let every one else be left in order to attend to him.

"Let superiors be careful in preaching in the simplest manner without declamation, without far-fetched phrases, and high-sounding words. Let them correct and punish those who fail in that, and if they do not amend, let them prevent their preaching, were it even in the middle of a mission. It is simplicity which has made us succeed up to this time. Let him who shows eagerness to obtain any office be refused, and let such conduct be considered as a scandal. He who manifests such desires will never produce fruit, for God does not assist the proud. No one ought to go on a mission for the sake of preaching and being seen, but only in obedience to superiors, and to win souls to Jesus Christ. Each one must also make a retreat for one or two days every month, as has been always the custom.

"It is not fit for all the fathers of the houses to go indiscriminately on missions, a selection must be made: let the regulation I have made on this subject be read.

"In conclusion, I especially recommend this work to all those who must have the management of it; let attention be paid to all that I have said, and let all former customs be observed. If one acts in a faulty manner during missions, it would be better to give them up than to have them to the detriment of our fervour and the disedification of the people.

"I remind all, and especially the rectors, punctually to observe all that was ordered in the year 1752, in the decree of his Catholic Majesty. Be well assured that he who resists the command of the prince, goes against the will of God. I exhort the rectors conscientiously to watch and see that the subjects, before going on mission, go through the spiritual exercises for ten days, according to the rule. Let not half be permitted, unless for some obvious necessity; for the rule intends that they shall be done thoroughly. If one does not gain holiness for oneself one cannot impart it to others. I also recommend a day's retreat to be made in the house every month. Some say that they suffer from melancholy; imaginations pass away when one converses with God. I also enforce retreat for the lay-brothers; they require it most on account of the distractions which their domestic labours cause them.

"There must always be a zealator in the houses, according to ancient custom; let him be a prudent subject and advanced in age: let there be a chapter for offences every Monday; if this is omitted, I charge the admonitor to inform me of it.

"No one shall have leave to keep linen, tobacco, or anything else as his own property, under any pretence whatsoever. I made a vow not to allow it, as you know. Thus, let everything which comes addressed to a subject be delivered over into the care of the rector or superior of the mission, and that each rector must remember the vow he uttered in entering into his office. This vow maintains poverty and preserves life in community.

"The rectors must be careful not to keep the fathers too much engaged by over many novenas, triduos, and other like exercises. To remain too long absent from the house, leads to dissipation of mind, and injures the health.

"The rectors must take care and provide all that is necessary for the subjects whom they send out of the monastery; they must tell them that when they are without, they must not get anything new, and far less anything of value. They must fix the places where they must stop to dine, and especially where they are to pass the night, in order to prevent their wandering here and there, and lodging wherever they may fancy most. Each month an account of conscience must be required, without fail; let the rectors always be particular on this point, for it is one which has not been much attended to. I wish the admonitors to watch over this rule, and that they should write to me directly if it is neglected.

"The superiors of houses where there are clerics ought not to distract these young men

from their studies by sending them without to preach. When a newly ordained priest has to receive faculties for confessions, he must not be qualified or presented to the bishop until I have been informed of it. I should first wish to examine him myself, or to have him examined by others; and then if he proves worthy, I will allow him to be presented to the bishop of the diocese.

"Permission to hear the confessions of women must only be granted to subjects of more than thirty years of age, unless they happen to have had faculties already; and this must also be attended to out of mission time. I also forbid subjects to be sent to hear the confessions of religious in convents without my express permission. Rectors must be very strict about this, and they must not often send even those who have been approved by me.

"The consultation must be held every month, as the rule directs. An account of whoever enters the house or quits it must also be kept. This must not be omitted, and no cause for complaint must be given to any subject in particular. I exhort that fanciful expenses must not be entered into, and no particular subject must be allowed to do anything of the kind. In regard to necessary expenses, those which exceed ten ducats, or which have to be repeated, ought to be proposed at the consultation, and if there is not unanimity in the matter, the rectors must always abstain from them; but in such case, they must appeal to the ancient fa-

thers, and reject or approve of the expense according to their opinion.

"Permission must not be given to subjects in particular to go to Naples or to other places unless there is some real necessity for it, and much less to go to their families. If any urgent business occurs and it can be put off for upwards of eight days, let me be informed of it in writing, and I will determine what time they may stay, in proportion to the importance of the case. Experience proves that loss of fervour generally arises from want of sufficient retirement and from anxiety about temporal affairs. Such things are fit for seculars, and not for ecclesiastics.

"I warn all who may be in Naples not to remain out in the evening, in order to spend the night anywhere but in our hospice, and that they must not dine in another house without the consent of the oldest father. Let each one return to the hospice before six o'clock in the evening, and after that a half hour of prayer in common must not be omitted.

"For the examination of young men wishing to be received, two periods of the year have been fixed, namely, the month of June and that of September; but I give notice to the rectors not to send any to me, if they have not sufficient capacity and all the other requisite qualifications.

"In fine, I exhort all superiors of houses and of missions, to watch over the conduct of the subjects, in order to see that they lead a truly ex-

emplary life, and that they observe not only the rules, but also all our pious and ancient customs. In case of breach of observance, (I mean when the matter is one of moment,) if the culprit should not amend after having been reprimanded, I must be informed of it, in order that I may remedy it. Faulty subjects give me more alarm than our persecutions. I also entreat each one to fear lest the Lord should expel him also, as He has lately expelled several. I love you all, but I cannot put up with those who will not amend. It would give me a scruple of conscience, and I cannot damn myself for any one.

"I wish this letter to be read in chapter before all the subjects of the house, that each one may be attentive in doing his duty; let it be kept and read every year in the month of October, before setting out on the missions."

CHAPTER XI.

All Naples was in a state of expectation of the report of the procurator for nearly three years, and no one doubted that it would be a crushing blow for the missionaries. Both friends and enemies were impatient for its appearance; the one from sentiments of fear and compassion towards us; the others from the wish to see us destroyed. The report was at length presented to the throne on the 13th of February, 1777. Our adversaries were infuriated against

us; but nothing equalled the animosity of the procurator, and the sword of opposition became doubly formidable in his hands; he had styled us rising Jesuits, and he had sworn to have the congregation suppressed, and the missionaries ruined.

We cannot give a better description of his intentions, than by here specifying the sentiments in which he drew up this report. In order to favour the Baron Sarnelli, he began by treating on the question of the contested property. He maintained that our houses were illicit bodies before the year 1752, and that if the Catholic King wished to approve us, we had nevertheless lost the favour of existing any longer through our refractoriness; that in consequence of this the property no longer belonged to us, but reverted to its former owner. This assertion is inexplicable, for how can houses, each of which were confirmed by a decree of the sovereign, be called illicit, and how can persons be designated as refractory who had literally followed the command of the king?

After having reinstated the baron in possession of his vineyard, the procurator enters into the criminal part of the offence. "Without dwelling any longer on the interests of one person," continued he, "it is my duty to set forth the numerous abuses which exist in the institute, and which may disturb the peace and good order of the kingdom." All these pretended crimes amounted to saying that the Catholic King, in approving us, had not intended us to

form ourselves into communities. Such was the opinion of the procurator, but he made a mistake; for had it been so, the king would not have authorised the erection of the houses by four decrees, nor permitted the missionaries to live together under the direction of Alphonso de Liguori. The procurator expressed surprise, that besides a superior general like Alphonso, each house also had its own particular rector, and that we did not live as mere priests, as the king wished, but as regulars, with a rule and constitutions.

What increased our offence in his eyes was, that the rule was approved by the Pope without being authorised by the royal council. He was not aware that Alphonso had submitted it to the king, who had had it in his own hands, and that if his majesty refused us the exequatur for just reasons, he had however deigned to consent to its being observed, which he intimated through the medium of the Marquis of Brancone; moreover, he even, as we have already seen, proposed the reform of a religious order to Alphonso, as he wished that we should adopt the habit of that order, whilst keeping our own rule.

The capital offence was, according to him, the participation of privileges which his Holiness Pope Benedict XIV. had granted to us, as well as to other congregations. As he could not deny that this brief had been confirmed in the royal council, on the 4th of July, 1763, he wished at least to pretend that this authorisa-

tion had been obtained by a fictitious statement. "Such things," said he, "manifest the formal establishment of a new religious society with a rule, a hierarchy, votes, and all that which characterises other religious. The Catholic King does not wish for a rule, noviciate, privileges, or possessions, nor for anything which resembles a congregation or a religious society."

He also found another offence in the house, which Alphonso erected in the states of Benevento. "The king," said he, "permitted the erection of four houses, and no more, and the missionaries, in opposition to the decree of the king, established a fifth, which is larger than the others in the states of Benevento." It is difficult to understand how the procurator dreamt of this prohibition, for the king, in his decree of 1752, wherein he approved of four houses which existed in the kingdom, did not prohibit others to be established in foreign states. He adds that the treasures of the kingdom were carried thither. He wished to strike a mortal blow by this, and he supports his assertion by naming the fiefs and numerous properties already acquired by the missionaries.

In order to render us inexcusable, and to aggravate our offences still more, he said that we were offshoots of the suppressed Jesuits. "After having read the rule," he went on to say, "I have found that it has very little resemblance to those of other institutes, while it is very like that of the Jesuits." However, if he had tho-

roughly read our rule, as he pretended to have done, he would have found it similar to that of St. Basil and St. Benedict; but everything was Jesuitism, according to the procurator. "In the definition of the authority of the superior-general," said he, "I plainly recognised the despot who governed the society of the Jesuits with such absolute power. The essence of Jesuitism consisted entirely in the absolute authority of the general, and in his power to expel any individual whatever from the society, notwithstanding his having taken the vows, and the length of time he might have lived in religion. It is in these two points alone that all the secret of Jesuit government consisted; it was by means of this secret that this society became so formidable, in spite of the numerous persecutions it endured at its commencement." Matters were not as the procurator imagined. St. Vincent of Paul and St. Philip Neri were not Jesuits, neither was the venerable Father D. Charles Carasa, the founder of the Congregation of Pious Labourers, and yet all, in order to purge their companies from vicious members, either would not allow all to take the vows, or preferred simple vows to a solemn profession. The procurator ought to have praised this system, and not to have condemned it, for as St. Alphonso said, "the winnowing machine in the barn only does good by severing the chaff from the wheat." But what amongst a great many other things excited the animadversion of the procurator the most, was the implicit obedience which

Alphonso required from the members of his congregation, as if there had ever been a society in the world which had subsisted without its members being under obedience to a head. This vow was what also wounded the heart of Martin Luther. According to him, one must condemn all the holy founders who have required this vow and this dependance from their disciples, and one must also condemn the Holy See which exacts this heroism for the canonization of religious.

He then went on, and incredible to relate, the very thing which conduces to the happiness of Church and state, namely, the sacrifice the missionary makes of his life for the service of souls, is in his eyes reprehensible. "It seems to me worthy of notice," said he, "that although it is said in the preamble of the rule that the subjects are only intended to preach to poor villagers, it afterwards speaks of spiritual exercises to be given in the houses to ecclesiastics and to seculars, nay more, of sermons to be delivered even in the houses of the missionaries. The Jesuits also limited themselves to a few exercises of piety at their commencement, although they afterwards wished to do everything, namely, preaching in their churches, having the spiritual exercises in the houses, teaching the classics and theology, and also guiding congregations of seculars, all which were to them the most powerful methods of obtaining followers without number; the same thing might happen in the case of these latter also." How could

the procurator justify this assertion? The numerous exercises in use amongst us were no new thing, as is well known to every one. The congregation undertook them from its commencement; the Catholic king rejoiced at them, and even manifested a wish that the work should always be maintained in its primitive state.

Even poverty awakened his zeal. He is vexed at riches, but he gets in a passion at poverty. "They can ask alms," he continues, "and they make a distinction as regards mission times. The Jesuits in the council of Trent also laboured ardently to be declared mendicants, but they afterwards found a subterfuge by means of which they succeeded in making immense acquisitions, without laying aside this habit of mendicity. Our missionaries will also begin to live by means of their private patrimony, they will then acquire landed property, and declare that they will not beg, then they will still manage to ask alms; and here is the very mixture of property and mendicity which was so favourable to the Jesuits." He should have remembered that though the Catholic king said it was a praiseworthy custom not to ask alms during missions, he did not prevent its being done at other times; for how were the missionaries to maintain themselves, have a church and a house, and provide for the clerical students if they were destitute of revenues, and the power of acquiring possessions? In the papers which were shown to him, the procurator might have seen the justifications of Alphonso and his sons, as well as

the accusations of our enemies. But he maintained what was to our disadvantage, and rejected our defence as full of equivocations and artifice. "This manner of speaking and acting, and of self-exculpation," said he, "makes me imagine that there is a great analogy between it and the conduct adopted by the Society of Jesus, whose proceedings and institute have been wholly abhorred and proscribed by all the princes of Europe and by the Sovereign Pontiff." The procurator got tired of thus heaping up offence upon offence, so he set up as a theologian, and censured Alphonso's doctrine; and although he had not been charged to do so, he did not hesitate to condemn his morals, as injurious to the Church, and as prejudicial to the state. "Such theology," these are his own words, "is quite according to the treatises of Jesuit authors, their fundamental principle is adopted therein with all its fatal consequences." As he wished to excite the prince's mind, he told him that his majesty was offended, the common salvation endangered, and what was worse, the safety of his person was threatened with danger. He then concluded with still greater zeal than ever: "The dangers resulting from such an impious doctrine being put in practice," said he, "is what has prompted me to entreat your Majesty to take the most energetic measures to sap it in its foundations, and that not by palliative remedies, but by severe and efficacious measures, so that there may be no further refuge for probablisms, and mental reservations,

and perjuries made lawful. I am not afraid," he continued, "to speak in this way in addressing your Majesty, because I plead for the morality of Jesus Christ our Saviour, whose holy religion consists in the purity of its morals; and if the ambition of some priests who burn with the wish to be reputed as new founders, (which is a most refined kind of ambition, and one which has at all times incited men to the greatest excesses,) if this ambition, I say, tends to corrupt this morality, it is then for your Majesty to exercise all the extent of power which God has placed in your hands for its re-establishment."

Such a bitter censure of the doctrine of Alphonso was what especially excited general indignation. The learned could not comprehend how it could be asserted that his Moral Theology was taken from the Jesuits, since there was not any author belonging to any order or institute whatever, from whom Alphonso did not reap some advantage. If the procurator had really read it, he would have discovered in Alphonso's morality the civil and canon laws, the Greek and Latin Fathers, and all the opinions of Pope Benedict XIV., which are so very impartial.

The natural consequences of such declamations must necessarily have been the suppression of the congregation. Whilst the Catholic king designates the congregation in his decree of 1752, as an eminently Christian work, and wishes that it should be maintained, the procurator pretends to prove that it ought to be destroyed,

as being useless to the Church and a burthen to the state. "There is no need," said he, "of new congregations nor of new encouragements to cause the ecclesiastical state to be embraced in a country where there are in all seventy-five thousand priests and monks. It is for the bishops, to whom the inhabitants of towns, as well as of the country places are entrusted, to think of instructing them, since it is to them that God has committed the office of placing the the ministers whom the hierarchy of the Church has established to assist them in ecclesiastical functions without being obliged to found new institutes; for it is through these particular congregations made use of in certain functions, that there is such an innumerable multitude of religious of divers institutes who have got heaped together during the course of ages, because new ones have been admitted, without getting rid of the old when they became useless. Thus to priests have been added monks, and brothers to them, and after brothers, clerks regular; and as if these were not enough, it is now wished to introduce this new religious society in an imperceptible manner."

The procurator continues his reflections, and in order to influence the king's mind still further, he says, "If your Majesty wishes to hear the opinion of the magistrates on what I represent to you, I hope they will not allow themselves to be deceived by the apparent utility there is in instructing poor villagers. All bad things have had good beginnings; there has

never been a sect in the world which has not at first appeared under a semblance of good; but time has shown that fanaticism, ambition, and a spirit of singularity were the moving springs which had given rise to the erection of new edifices, or which had at least succeeded a spirit of piety, and were what continued to support them."

When he thought he had said enough to convince the prince, he proposes his own opinion. He wished that an examination of the Moral Theology of Liguori should be entrusted to theologians professing sound doctrine, "In order," said he, "that his Majesty may see that it contains a very great number of errors which destroy true Christian morality, and that he may warn his subjects to shun reading it with horror, by interdicting it according to the accustomed forms."

In the second place he wished that the said missionaries should be positively denied all form of a congregation, any superiors, novices, students, confraternities, or privileges, and in fact, all that appertains to a real congregation.

In the third place, he wished that an order should be issued that their possessions should be sold, whether they were in the name of the bishops, or in their own name, with the exception of those on which any private individual had any claim, such as the Baron de Ciorani, and that their produce should be formed into a capital with the interests of which an annual income of seventy-four ducats was to be assign-

ed to each of the present ecclesiastics ordained *in sacris*, as long as they lived, according to the estimate made by his Catholic Majesty. All the other subjects, and especially the novices, were to be sent to their respective homes. The procurator was much mistaken in this, for, putting aside the contested vineyard, the revenues of all the houses put together did not amount to a sum exceeding five hundred and ninety ducats; where then was the surplus to be found, to give each priest seventy-two ducats of annual revenue, as he wished? We have here however a good specimen of the true value of the riches of which our adversaries spoke so emphatically, and which the advocate procurator set forth with so much eloquence. Finally, he wished that we should be deprived of power to ask alms, and that until the Moral Theology taught by our founder was examined, the missionaries should also be prohibited from entering the confessional and the pulpit. The procurator thought that he had not done enough, even though he had expressed his opinion in such an outrageous style, so he again tried to force the sovereign, if I may so say, to put it in execution. The rising congregation seemed a weight on his heart. "Let not your Majesty think," he adds, "that if you do not use strong and efficacious remedies, this new congregation will not also increase; others have arisen in the midst of contradictions, and this will spread in the same manner. They will wait for a more propitious time, and then the present contro-

versy will be placed amongst the number of the glories of the institute, and my name, which otherwise only deserves obscurity, will be rendered famous in the History of the Life of Don Alphonso Liguori, in which it will be said that the devil stirred me up against the congregation, as he always does against good works." Thus ended the report made by Leon the procurator to his Majesty; it was a master-piece worthy of the age wherein the Society of Jesus was suppressed.

CHAPTER XII.

The report of the procurator was a thunderbolt which cast terror into all hearts. I leave it to be imagined what great mourning and consternation were seen in all our houses. All conspired against us, so that even our friends saw no further means of defending us; but the greatest misfortunes do not daunt magnanimous hearts.

When Alphonso heard of the sentiments put forth by the procurator, he was not at all cast down. "The work is from God," said he, "He is able to preserve or to destroy it;" then he gave vent to the trust which filled his heart. "Such is the opinion of the procurator," added he, "but it is not that of God. I am persuaded, and hold it as quite certain, that Jesus Christ will not fail to protect this work, which

is entirely for His glory and the good of souls. I am not afraid to place my cause in the hands of the king, as I feel assured that he will not embrace the opinions of the procurator, for he knows too well how to appreciate the utility of our missions."

Animated by this confidence, he immediately had recourse to his anchor of daily safety; he commended himself to the prayers of many devout souls, especially of divers convents of religious, both at Naples and in the provinces, and he wished that the psalm "Qui habitat" should be said in all the houses; that the discipline in common should continue to be taken every Monday; and he ordered Saturday to be kept as a fast in honour of the Blessed Virgin. He inculcated on the rectors that they must especially watch closely over the observance of that same rule which our enemies chose to aim at. He several times sent alms to the Capuchinesses at Naples, as well as wax candles to the Camaldolese fathers, that they might have exposition and prayer before the blessed Sacrament.

As he saw that his infirmities were continually increasing, he wrote to our house at Frosinone, saying, "Pray to God for me, in order that He may grant me a good end. I am very near it now; for I daily feel my head getting weaker. God be praised for evermore! As to our affairs, both hopes and fears are entertained here. Prayer alone can be of much assistance to us."

The procurator's report was not long of becoming known even as far as the provinces, and our triumphant adversaries very nearly caused it to be published in the newspapers. Letters were sent to their correspondents with all diligence, and everywhere they talked only of our speedy suppression. When the bishops heard of this state of things, those who had the greatest interest hastened to present divers petitions to the king, attesting the probity of our missionaries, the poverty in which they lived, their disinterestedness, and above all, their submission to orders from those in authority, and last of all, the great good they effected in the provinces. It was thus that Mgr. Volpé, the bishop of Nocera, and Mgr. Pacelli, the bishop of Bovino, distinguished themselves amongst others, as well as the two Archbishops of Salerno and of Conza, and Cardinal Banditti, the Archbishop of Benevento. They all stated that if the missionaries were absent from their dioceses, they would lose the only means they had of providing spiritual blessings for their flocks; a great number of other bishops and archbishops made the same representations. Whilst hell thus strove to destroy the congregation, Alphonso redoubled his efforts to oppose the forces of our enemies, and to win souls to Jesus Christ. "Redeemed souls," said he, "ought to be the advocates of our cause."

From the end of 1777 until the month of May of 1778, inclusively, thirty-five missions were given with benefit and satisfaction to the bishops. The holy exercises were given to eight

clergymen, seven seminaries, and nineteen convents in the dioceses of Caserto, Averso, Capua, Benevento, Cerreta, Avellino, Bari, Acerenza, and Matera, without speaking of a great many triduos during the carnival, the devotion of the forty hours, and the Sundays in Advent.

On seeing such labours undertaken for the good of souls, Providence could not fail to aid us against the efforts of the procurator; the tears of so many just men could not be unfruitful, and Alphonso's confidence could not be deceived. When the procurator's report was presented to the king in the first chamber of the ministry, Alphonso, in order to escape the juncta for abuses, and to get the cause sent back to the royal council, addressed petitions and letters of supplication to the new prime-minister, the Marquis of Sambuca. He got Cardinal Branciforte, the Bishop of Girgenti, who was then at Naples, to intercede with him, and Mgr. Filomarino, the Bishop of Caserto. "Your Eminence can easily obtain this favour from the Marquis," he wrote to him on the 21st of February, 1777; "in truth, it ought rather to be called an act of justice than a favour; I confidently hope to obtain this through your Eminence before the report is followed by any fresh result, which might cause the entire ruin of our poor congregation." He also complained to the cardinal of the censure passed on his Moral Theology: "As far as I can make out," said he, "the report is completely hostile to us. Amongst other things it is said that my work on Moral Theology is

according to the doctrine of the Jesuits, and that I profess opinions contrary to the welfare of the state and of the Gospel. Besides the approbation my Morals received at Naples and Rome from those two powers, they have been reprinted six times, and received with applause at Rome, in Spain, in Germany, and even in France. I have been told that the king has been asked to forbid their use to all the members of the congregation I direct, on account of the errors with which they are infected, and also to prohibit them from hearing confessions and from preaching until after the examination of my Morals. If this be done my brothers will be useless in the kingdom of Naples and in Sicily."

The examination of the cause by the ministers was of itself enough to overthrow the report of the procurator; his malice was clearly seen and acknowledged, and his partiality to our enemies was but too evident. For this reason the king, in justice to Alphonso, decreed on the 7th of March, 1777, that the action should be sent back to the royal council, where the report should be examined. The Marquis of Sambuca took pleasure in rendering us this good office. This minister was speaking to Mgr. Filomarino at this time, when he said to him, "It gives me pleasure to be able to serve Mgr. Liguori." Alphonso gained fresh strength on seeing this dispensation of Providence, and full of consolation he wrote to Father Don Francis de Paul at Frosinone as follows: "I can do nothing but thank Jesus and Mary for all the many blessings they have con-

ferred on me during these last days of my life. I have had fever and a catarrh for four days, but now I am better. We have good news from Naples of the action with Sarnelli, for it has been remanded to the royal council, in conformity to the petition we addressed to that effect. Thus matters have now an altered appearance. Blessed for ever be Jesus and Mary."

It may be easily imagined what an effect this change of scene must have produced on our enemies; they were all the more disconcerted as they had already proclaimed that the decree for our suppression was fixed on. "This pretended degree for our suppression," wrote Alphonso, on the 21th of March, to our fathers at Frosinone, "is a falsehood spread about by our enemies; but you must now make it everywhere known that this report has been circulated without any foundation. Things have gone very well; as the report of the procurator has been remanded to the royal council." He wrote as follows to our fathers in Sicily: "Matters are going on well at Naples: Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui sancto, benedictus Deus qui facit mirabilia magna solus." And in a letter to the house at Frosinone, he adds, "The greatest opposition refers to my Morals; but I have written a long pamphlet, which justifies me fully."

Besides this voucher, in which Alphonso appears both as a theologian and a canonist, he also resumed his former spirit of a lawyer, and without departing from that of Jesus Christ, he digested an ample defence in reply to all the ac-

cusations. "I have also been obliged to compose a pamphlet containing several sheets," he wrote to Father Don Francis de Paul, on the 27th of the same month: "it is a miracle that it has not caused me the slightest indisposition." Every one was affected by this petition of the venerable old man, the talent of which was no less admired than the moderation.

He also addressed divers letters to the ministers of the royal councils, to assure them of the submission which he and his professed for their sovereign, and to place calumny and innocence in their true light; but while he defended himself, he did not abuse his enemies, and this confounded them by discouraging their advocates. As they were obliged to acknowledge the moderation of Alphonso, they exculpated him, and for the future only blamed the missionaries. When the cause was on the point of being discussed, he again sought to obtain the mediation of several lords in the court. He especially employed the Prince of Riccia, and begged him to speak to the Duke of Turitto in a favourable manner of us, and in the terms demanded by justice. "Your Excellency," he wrote to him, "ought to confer this favour on us without delay, and to-morrow evening, which is Monday, you should send him a note. I am aware of your Excellency's goodness towards our poor persecuted congregation, and, after God, your Excellency alone can aid us." The prince lost no time in complying with Alphonso's wishes, who immediately wrote to thank him, adding,

"In case your Excellency should happen to meet the duke, I beseech you not to omit to entreat him to be charitable towards our poor companions, who labour and do good throughout the kingdom. Except your Excellency, we have no one who can defend us. In aiding us you aid thousands of poor souls, especially those of these poor country people amongst whom we labour."

Our fathers at Naples, knowing how much more efficacious his presence would have been than his letters, did not fail to importune him to come to the capital. The poor old man was distressed at these solicitations, and replied to Father Majone, on the 2nd of September, saying, "He who sees to what a miserable state I am now reduced, would not, I think, have the courage to require me to repair to Naples, to go and visit the president, the cardinal, Sambuca, and Paoletti. My arrival would only serve to attract the hootings of a crowd of children, who would be curious to know if the man in the carriage were dead or alive. It is a thing which cannot be thought of, because I cannot do it; and besides, my presence would not make the cause succeed. It would be better for me not to speak to the president, because he would begin to contradict me as soon as ever I began to speak. As for Sambuca, he would only be surprised at the pitiable condition I am in, and he would not be able to understand me, for the weakness of my head prevents my being able to express my thoughts clearly, and I cannot now pronounce my words properly. As to the cardinal, I do

not see what great advantage could result from my interview with him. Your thoughts sound well, but they are but thoughts. I am ready to give my life for the congregation, but not for certain useless measures. Let us place ourselves in God's hands; He will know better than we how to defend this cause, which is more His than ours."

Although matters appeared under a favourable aspect, Alphonso did not wish the cause to be immediately discussed in the council. "Time is a courteous man," said he, "and he is of wonderful assistance to him who is persecuted." As for our enemies, as they knew how much difficulty they would have in proving their accusations, they would have been glad to temporize; but as they were aware that delay would certainly be disadvantageous to them, they were eager in demanding this discussion. When the day for it was at length fixed, it would be difficult to believe what preparations the baron and Maffei made against us. There were no less than seven advocates appointed to assist them in the council in declaiming against us. They visited all the offices of the ministry, and the procurator himself, who was jealous of his honour, went round about everywhere making a commentary on his famous report. Alphonso, on his side, did not omit to prepare himself for this dreadful day; but instead of seeking to gain strength by a multiplicity of advocates and procurators, he caused all his sons to unite with him in redoubling their prayers and penances. "I have all

the fathers with me," he wrote on the 29th of June, 1777, to Caposèli; "we shall offer up mass for this end on each of these days. You must at least say prayers." The cause was however deferred until the month of August, 1779; but up to this time he did not cease to raise our arms to Heaven, in order to appease it, and to merit the salvation of the congregation.

CHAPTER XIII.

In consideration of the dangers which the houses in the kingdom incurred by being unceasingly engaged in warfare with enemies who were as obstinate as they were powerful, Alphonso neglected nothing which could strengthen the two houses in the Pontifical States of Scifelli and Frosinone. "In the event of a tempest," said he, "these houses will be our refuge." He rejoiced at seeing them founded, and he unceasingly prayed to God to give him grace to strengthen them. "The house of Frosinone," he wrote to Father de Paul, in a letter dated the 7th of July, 1777, "interests me more than that of Girgenti, because that house is independant of the kingdom. The persecutions we endured at Naples have not yet terminated, and I attach the greatest importance to maintaining this foundation, for which we are indebted to the Pope." In another letter of the

19th of September, he said, "I have again been suffering from one of those catarrhs, which will one day deprive me of life. By the grace of God, I am now better again. If it be God's good pleasure, I should like to live until I can succeed, through my pension, in completing the affair of the patronage of the church, and in finishing the building now commenced. Tell me what state the little rooms near the church are in. For the present, I can only dispose of about ten carlins; but I hope to receive some money from St. Agatha shortly. Do not doubt that I will send you as much as I can." Alphonso attached weight to each subject having his own room. "Without that," said he, "a religious is a most miserable man."

"I see," said he, in another letter, "that your Reverence will require money; I will do all in my power to assist you as soon as possible; but I do not know to whom to apply, and it is with difficulty that I send you these few ducats. Father Landi has just written to tell me that they are in the greatest misery at Scifelli; I have been obliged to divide the small sum of which I have been able to dispose, by causing six ducats to be borrowed by Brother Leonard. I hope that I shall be able to send you some further assistance towards the month of October, but it cannot be considerable, because I have a great many debts. I am in continual distress, from seeing that I cannot assist Frosinone and Scifelli as I should wish; but I calm myself about it because it is the will of

God. I have been begging alms, and I have got thirteen ducats, which added to the other twenty-seven, amount to forty." He was anxious to see these houses in a state fit to be inhabited, the subjects were so straitened for room, that two or three of them were obliged to occupy one room, which sometimes made them lose patience. Alphonso had allowed some debts for building to be contracted, but not any beyond his resources. "Father Constant," he wrote to Father de Paul, "has twice reproved me sharply for not having sent him more than two hundred ducats, whilst he was four hundred and fifty scudi in debt. Yes! it is very true that I told him to procure some money by borrowing, but I meant that it should be a moderate sum; now I find that four hundred and fifty scudi are in question, which must positively be paid; yet, if I do not take some money from the pension, where shall I find any? even were I to sell my cassock, I should not obtain twenty carlins. I will try and provide for it as well as I can. They also want assistance at Scifelli; but I have nothing at present, and so I can send nothing."

Alphonso's solicitude for the houses in the Pontifical States was so great, that he would have liked to hear of all that went on there every day, and he complained when he was left in ignorance of anything. As Father de Paul did not consult him about the patronage of a chapel which concerned the house at Frosinone, Alphonso wrote to him, saying,

"The affairs of Frosinone are only communicated to me for form's sake, and I know nothing really about them. I have this evening heard that an accommodation has been made through Mgr. Veroli, but as usual, without explaining what has been done to me, and what are his Lordship's sentiments; so that I am as much in the dark as I was before." This father replied that he might be very well satisfied to leave all things to him; but these words were considered as heresy by Alphonso. "Your Reverence," he answered him, "tells me to leave things alone: I have never hindered your communicating what you do to me, but I never dispensed you from so doing. Thank God, I am not yet dead, and have not lost my senses. On the contrary, I have been an advocate and a bishop, and I have several times had to do with such things. I am now superior general; what reason can there be for not informing me? In charity, you must write and tell me what is done, what is transacted, and with whom. I have given a thousand opinions as advocate and as bishop, but now you do everything quite of your own accord, and look upon me as entirely useless. Enough of this; for the future I wish to be informed of everything that takes place. Let me know all. In conclusion, there is perhaps no house which has given me more trouble than that of Frosinone. God be praised!" In another letter, in which he sent him several manuscripts for divers cardinals, and a me-

morial to be presented to the Pope, he wrote as follows: "Tell the Pope that I do not forget the great charity he has manifested to me in so many ways, and that I always recommend him to God."

In spite of so many anxieties, Alphonso did not lose sight of the missions; he wished to be informed of all requests made on this subject, and although distant from the places himself, he distributed the subjects himself, combined their characters and their inclinations, their docility or their imperfections, and their greater or less aptitude for the ministry. "Do not arrange about any mission," he wrote to Father de Paul on the 5th of October, "if you have not previously informed me all about it, and send me an express if there is any necessity for it. You must excuse yourself to the bishops who ask you for missions, by saying that you cannot allow them without my leave." He also wished to be informed of the number of inhabitants in each place, the circumstances of the place, and the state of the clergy there. "I wish," he said in the same letter, "that the missions be made with all possible prudence and edification, and in quite an apostolic spirit." As the good of souls was always very dear to his heart, he thought of what a happy influence the spiritual graces accorded by the Head of the Church might have on the missions; so on the 12th of September, 1777, he addressed a detailed recital to Pope Pius VI., of the origin and progress of the Con-

gregation, its labours and its sufferings, as well as of the good which the missions effected, and entreated his Holiness to communicate to him the graces, privileges, and indulgences which had been granted to the Passionist Fathers. He obtained all that he asked for from the Sovereign Pontiff.

Our enemies, as we have already seen, everywhere exclaimed that we exported millions into the houses in the States. In order to take away all pretext for this calumny, Alphonso, in a letter of the 12th of October, forbade any money to be received for novenas, triduos, or other discourses. "I expressly forbid," he there said, "in virtue of holy obedience, even a carlin belonging to the kingdom from being accepted for any reason whatever. We run the risk of being the object of some disastrous decree in the kingdom, and if the houses of Naples are suppressed, those of Romagna will be greatly endangered. It seems to me that all which I have written is necessary and right, because I have written with reflection." "You know," he added to the same Father de Paul, "that I keep up these houses in Romagna to see the rule vigorously attended to. Manage so that the fathers make the accustomed retreat, or if they are ill at least a part."

Having heard that it had been fixed on to give some sermons during Lent contrary to the rule, he was dissatisfied at it. "I have heard that your Reverence," he wrote in a letter of the 12th of September, 1777, to Father Don

Deodatus Crisenoli, "has accepted an exercise for Lent in the diocese of Sora, and that Father de Paul has done so at Atin, in the diocese of Aquino. I am displeased that you did not previously inform me of this resolution. I know that these Lenten exercises were not sought for by you, and that they were offered by the parishes; but however that may be, I do not wish your Reverence, or any one else, to agree to undertake such exercises, especially in the kingdom. Our institute forbids it, and it would become a cause for jealousy. In any event, your Reverence must try to excuse yourself to Mgr. de Sora, and Father de Paul to the Bishop of Aquino, by representing my prohibition to them, and the observance of rule which I require. I wish you to be solely engaged in missions; they are what God wishes for from us, and not Lents. Obey, however great be the solicitations of parishes and bishops."

Under circumstances which seemed to justify it, Father de Paul ventured to ask him for leave to preach during Lent in the college at Frosinone, and to accept the usual remuneration; but Alphonso replied to him, "As for preaching this Lent, it is true there are some reasons for so doing, on account of our extreme want, but I will not have the rule broken, which expressly forbids it. Leave all to our good God. If we labour for Him, He will never allow us to want what is necessary."

In the following year, in the month of October, he wrote as follows to the houses of Scifelli and

Frosinone: "My fathers and my brothers, since Jesus Christ has willed the establishment of our poor congregation in the Pontifical States, where our rule, which has been approved by the Pope, is incontestibly in all its vigour, I wish for nothing from your Reverence but the exact observance of community life, poverty, obedience, and all that is prescribed by the rule and the constitutions. As God has comforted me by the establishment of these houses, I also wish to have the consolation of seeing the observance of the rule properly attended to, so that God may be thereby glorified; it is the thing which I am most anxious to enforce on you ere I die. On the observance of the rule depends the blessing of God, and the true fervour of the members of the congregation, the success of the missions, the propagation of the Institute, and the accomplishment of its end. I entreat you not to follow the example of the four houses in the kingdom, where the congregation and the rule are approved by his Majesty. On the contrary, the other houses, present and future, ought to imitate the two houses in the Campagna. This is my advice to you, and I should like to inculcate it on you as forcibly as possible now and evermore. I do not wish you to have riches, but only what is really necessary to enable you to live in the love and in the esteem of the rule which God has given you for your sanctification, and that of others. Aid all souls, but especially those of the poor and worthless. Remember that God has raised us up to preach His word

to the poor: 'Evangelizare pauperibus misit nos.' Engrave this maxim well on your minds and hearts, if you would be pleasing to Jesus Christ. Seek God alone in the wretched poor. Above all, I wish that you should devote yourselves with fervour to instructing the poor in the neighbourhood where the houses are founded, by catechisms, confessions, and the other methods in use amongst us, in order that these people may not be deceived in the hopes they entertain of being sanctified through your labours."

His great solicitude to cause the rule to be vigorously observed did not prevent him also taking every care of the health of his subjects. His vigilance on this point was also extreme. "When health is lost," said he, "the subject can no longer be of use to his neighbour or to himself. You tell me that the house might very well be inhabited," he wrote to Father de Paul, "but the doctor thinks that it ought not to be so before October, and I will not endure remorse for having caused the death of some brother."

The poverty which the houses in the States suffered, was the cause of great uneasiness to Alphonso. The poor old man was affected by it, and as the amount of his pension and of the college at Naples was not enough, he almost went without bare necessaries in order to assist them. The rector of Frosinone told him of his distress. In reply, Alphonso said to him, "Try to remedy it as well as you can until October; I am now as poor as a beggar. Would to God that I could send you all my pension, but I am

here in the house at Nocera, where there is nothing. Do not doubt that I will send you all I can." And in another letter he said to him, "I cannot send you anything before October, and after November I cannot promise you a large sum, because I am in debt, and a certain sum of money which I ought to have had in October, has been already remitted to me. I have always felt as much affection for Frosinone as for Scifelli, but there are a greater number of young men at Scifelli who are now in want of bread, Father Landi has written me word. Foundations in their commencement occasion distress, confusion, contradiction, and misery; but if we remain entirely resigned to the will of God, He will remedy everything. Let us behave properly, and Jesus Christ will protect us. Remember this constantly, but if we commit faults, He will completely abandon us."

When the necessary buildings were made, he forbade anything further to be undertaken. "I send you thirty ducats as a subsidy for the house at St. Cecily; I do not wish them to be spent in building, but only for the maintenance of the subjects." He went so far as to moderate the expenses for the embellishment of the church, notwithstanding his tendency to render the house of the Lord, and the worship of the saints, worthy of celestial regards. "Poverty," said he, "does no injury either to God or to us. Extraordinary expenses must not be incurred for the church," he wrote in one of his letters, "nor for the pictures, statues, chasubles,

or other rich ornaments without my permission. I equally forbid marble altars to be erected at our expense. On solemnities, decorations and illuminations must be spared, even if others are willing to bear the cost. I also forbid all kind of adornment on the altar, as well as decorations in silk or any other rich material; let it be ornamented with garlands, candles, and flowers; these are befitting the state of poverty in which we are at present." Alphonso watched over everything, but he dwelt principally on love and fraternal charity. "If the bond of love is wanting," said he, "that bond which unites us together to Jesus Christ, everything is wanting, had one the riches of Crœsus." "I wish," said he in a letter of the 7th of July, 1777, "that you should all live together there in peace and harmony, and without breaches against charity. St. Ignatius detested and severely punished whoever spoke or acted against charity." Alphonso above all exacted humility and gentleness on the part of superiors. A want of charity or any imperious air on their part pierced his heart, and he reprimanded them for it without fear. "I entreat your Reverence," said he to Father de Paul, who at that time was the superior at Frosinone, "to be humble towards your companions, and affable towards all, especially in mission time, and to treat your brothers with all possible consideration, remembering that they are far from their country and their family, and that thus they have a right to have the exercise of charity redoubled in their regard."

CHAPTER XIV.

Like great conflagrations, which the winds only serve to increase, so Alphonso, in the midst of the assaults of hell, constantly thought of new works for the good of humanity. Considering that wherever the people lead a well-regulated life, and perform their duties to God, one finds submission towards the sovereign coexistent with morality, he composed a work which he entitled, "The Fidelity of Subjects towards God is a sure pledge of that which they have for their Prince." "Sin against God, and respect towards the king are incompatible," said he; "he who fears not God, also despises the king." As he was deeply convinced of this truth, he became alarmed at the very name of treason or conspiracy. "They deceive themselves," said he in speaking of monarchs; "they will never have any peace, if they have not the prevention of immorality at heart; where religion does not reign, iniquity triumphs, as well as perfidy; admit sin, and all is in peril; but if they make their subjects faithful towards God, they will find that they will be equally faithful towards them." He strengthened what he asserted from the example of several wise and religious princes who have rendered their states flourishing and enjoyed the fruits of peace through not having neglected the spiritual welfare of their subjects. When he wrote this

work, he said to one of us, in a transport of holy zeal, "Have as many missions as you please; but if I gain one sovereign, it is worth more than a thousand missions; for the good which a sovereign who is touched by the grace of God can do, could not be effected by a thousand missions."

As the town of Rome is connected with many others, and is the centre of monarchies, so to speak, he took care to send several copies of this work to Cardinal Castelli, and through him to all the ministers of foreign powers. He also applied to Canon Henry Hennequin, to get it conveyed to the august Maria Theresa, to the electoral prince of Cologne, to that of Treves, to the archbishops and all the bishops of the empire who have temporal possessions. He also transmitted it to Prince Charles, the governor of the Netherlands, to the Kings of Spain and of Portugal, to the King of Turin, to the Duke of Parma, and to the Grand-Duke of Tuscany; in a word, to all the Catholic sovereigns, and to all the principal ministers. None of the answers of these personages to Alphonso are in existence, for, according to custom, he had sacrificed them to his humility. Vincent Maria de Majo was full of admiration for this work, and could not refrain from extolling Alphonso's piety and learning, and especially his great zeal for the good of souls and of the Church, notwithstanding his great age and infirmities. "I have been in doubt," said Canon Simeoli, "not knowing whether to admire most the purity of the maxims contained

in this work or the unction it breathes, and which is a distinctive characteristic of our author, who is equally well known for his piety and for his learning." This work became so celebrated beyond the mountains, that it was translated into French and sold in divers kingdoms. "This work," said the translator, "is the voice of a soul which thirsts for nothing but the glory of religion, the spread of morality, and the happiness of sovereigns and their subjects, and which has no other ambition than that of leading men to virtue and rendering them happy. All the works which have been written by the venerable prelate who composed this immortal treatise, bear the stamp of genius and of a feeling heart."

From the time of the suppression of the Jesuits the town of Benevento was deprived of the numerous benefits it had received from these religious. When this metropolis was given up to the Pope, on the 5th of February, 1774, after the entrance of the army of our august King Ferdinand IV., the see was vacant, through the death of Mgr. Colombini, and divers petitions were therefore addressed to the holy father Pius VI., in order to expose the spiritual necessities of the people of Benevento to him. When Mgr. Francis Maria Banditti, the Bishop of Montefiasconc, was elected Archbishop of Benevento, and made cardinal, the holy father charged him, after he had taken possession of his see, to suggest some expedient to him by which he might further the glory of God and the good of souls at Bene-

vento, and supply the void which the Jesuits had left there.

Cardinal Banditti consulted the canons of the cathedral at Benevento, and the nobles of the town, and all agreed as to giving up the church and college belonging to the suppressed Jesuits to the Redemptorist Fathers, as well as all the rentals attached to them. The cardinal applied to Mgr. Liguori, and every one believed that the proposal would be accepted; but as Alphonso was always averse to establish any of the members of his congregation in large towns, he declined the cardinal's very flattering offer with thanks. He told him that Benevento already possessed a great many eminent religious, who could supply the spiritual wants of the people, while we were more profitably engaged among the poor of the country.

Neither the clergy nor the nobles of Benevento would give up the point, but as they were unable to prevail on Alphonso, they addressed themselves to Father Villani. The cardinal himself wrote to him with confidence that Benevento was in a state of destitution as well as the villages, that the other religious, however numerous, did not devote themselves exclusively to anything but the works of their institutes. Father Villani assented to these reasons, principally for the sake of the houses in the kingdom, and as Alphonso himself was obliged to acknowledge the justice of these representations, he no longer refused to acquiesce in the foundation.

When Pius VI. was informed of it he rejoiced greatly, and in a letter written with his own hand, on the 23rd of April, 1777, he granted us the church, college, and all the revenues of the suppressed Jesuits. On the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, that is to say, on the 6th of June, 1777, we entered into possession of this house, with the consent of his Eminence Cardinal Banditti, of the clergy, and the civil authorities, as well as of the chief nobles. Father Gaspar Cajone was appointed superior of this house, and he preached there to the satisfaction of the whole town; the church was frequented from this day, and all the pious labours of the Jesuits were re-established.

CHAPTER XV.

However great were the dangers to which his congregation was exposed, Alphonso did not forget the wants of the Church. He bitterly wept at seeing what progress infidelity and libertinism made in France through the fatal influence of the writings of M. Voltaire and Jean Jacques Rousseau; he grieved over it the more because their contagion had begun to penetrate into Italy, and the works of Voltaire formed the fashionable reading at Naples, so that even ladies made them the pastime for their idleness. As his age and infirmities no

longer left him strength enough to combat them, he unceasingly encouraged different literary friends of his at Naples to labour in their refutation.

He was sorrowing over them, when one day a refutation of the errors of Voltaire, upon which the worthy Abbé Francis Claude Nonnotte was then engaged, fell into his hands; he was full of joy at this, and could not cease to thank God for having raised up a man who braved the spirit of the age, and occupied himself for His glory with such courageous devotion. Animated by holy zeal, he did not fail to write him a letter of congratulation and encouragement, for his having dared to undertake the refutation of the most impious of blasphemers. We have not got this letter, but from the following reply, dated 21st of April, 1778, we can see how expressive it must have been.

"Claude Francis Nonnotte, priest of Besançon, to Mgr. and most Reverend Father in Jesus Christ, Don Alphonso de Liguori, bishop, and superior-general of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

"My Most Reverend Father,

"I do not believe that any one ever experienced more pleasure and satisfaction than I felt when I read your letter. It is so full of such great proofs of charity and kindness, it evinces such love for religion and all virtue, that I was tempted to believe that it was written by an angel rather than by a man. As

I am accustomed to appreciate nothing except in conformity to the spirit of God, it is an unspeakable pleasure to me to meet with men who also value the things of God alone, and who in themselves, being greater than great dignities could make them, cause one to be in doubt whether most to admire in them the gifts of genius which they possess, or the bright lustre of the greatest virtue. I have often sought for such men; I had not found any such when your letter arrived to inform me that there is one at Naples. No words of mine can express to you how much I esteem that one, and with what affection I am attached and devoted to him..... All who have read your excellent and very celebrated work on Moral Theology, congratulate me on my having received such a flattering letter from so learned a prelate, and I congratulate myself in turn for having received the approbation of so distinguished a man for my works. Through reading the favourable opinion you have condescended to give on my writings, I have seen your great love for religion," &c.

In order to encourage this generous confessor to strive more and more against these impious persons, who were so furiously bent against the Church, Alphonso undertook to present a petition to the Sovereign Pontiff to obtain an apostolical brief in favour of the Philosophical Dictionary of Religion. "It is with unspeakable pleasure and gratitude," Abbé Nonnotte replied to him, "that I have heard that you have re-

solved to address a petition to the Sovereign Pontiff, to ask him for an approbation for my Dictionary, such as Clement XIII. deigned to give to my book called, 'The Errors of Voltaire.' It is indeed an object which I most ardently desire, and for this reason I sent him my works very elegantly bound and ornamented, so as to be worthy to be placed in the hands of his Holiness; but I have not received any answer, although Cardinal Pallivicini, to whom I wrote, told me that he had transmitted them to the Sovereign Pontiff. Have I then to believe that my work has been despised by this great Pope, or that I am deceived for some reason of which I am ignorant? I leave the decision of this point to your superior judgment, most reverend prelate. The encouragement you give me is most charitable. You exhort me to attack and to combat unceasingly all the new sophisms which may again be brought forth by the followers of this infernal philosophy, as I have done hitherto. I have already undertaken to do all that you wish for and hint at, nay, I have even completed it; but the want of suitable and necessary assistance, has prevented me from publishing what I have written. Notwithstanding that, I have finished a third volume on the 'Errors of Voltaire,' entitled, 'The Spirit of Voltaire in his Writings.' I have there tried to show that as long as the works of Voltaire are to be found in the hands of our young people, there will never be any hope that the homage and love which are due to religion can be re-es-

tablished amongst us. I should have been exceedingly glad to have had this work printed at Paris, but for this it would have required to have had it sanctioned by the approbation of some royal censor; and every one here is so full of wild admiration for Voltaire, or rather, the fear which this extremely sarcastic man inspires is so great, that I have not been able to succeed in finding a friendly examiner; on the contrary, even the Archbishop of Paris himself told me that I should never find a censor of this kind. Surely this is a thing worthy of astonishment! I shall perhaps be obliged to cause a book which I have composed in defence of religion to be printed at Geneva, because Catholics have not courage to do it. I may well here exclaim with Cicero, 'O tempora! O mores!' For upwards of twenty years I have been constantly under arms to fight for the Lord, and I have never received any aid from man, on the contrary, I have been loaded with invectives from the impious; but I am full of trust in God, and I do not lose courage; I even feel it redoubled on thinking that I cannot wage a more salutary conflict. Your letter however has been as a fresh spur to me, because it not only betokens zeal for religion, but also sentiments of the most sweet charity; for this reason I ardently pray God that as He has deigned to unite us together in this exile, He would also reunite us together in our heavenly country. Farewell."

If Alphonso's letter had been a subject of

gladness and of consolation to Abbé Nonnotte, the abbé's reply filled Alphonso with sorrow and regret. He grieved, and could not take any rest, on hearing what great favour Voltaire was in, and what applause he received, especially in Paris, so that not one amongst the royal examiners could be found to reprove his blasphemies, and to give himself up to the defence of the truth. "O God!" exclaimed he, "at Paris, where there are so many Christian orators, there is not any one to be found who will oppose this monster, who is so great an enemy to the Church and to religion, and this defence must be published at Geneva! Miserable beings that we are! This is the authority the Church has in Paris! She cannot face an infidel and reprove his audacity! Poor archbishop! poor Church! This abuse will not undoubtedly remain unpunished! Poor France! I pity thee, and I pity the many innocent people who will be involved in thy disgrace!"

He would have liked to send the letters to the king, "But how could I effect at a distance," said he, "what the archbishop and so many good bishops cannot obtain although they are on the spot?"

A false ray of consolation came for a moment to soften the grief of our afflicted old man: in the May of this same year of 1778, there was a report at Naples that Voltaire had retracted his errors and his blasphemies, and that, corresponding with the influence of grace, he had declared himself to be a sincere Catho-

lic. Alphonso felt great joy on hearing that Abbé Nonnotte had laboured to refute him; but it is impossible to express what he felt, when he heard that he himself abhorred his errors. He was animated by fresh zeal, and entertained the idea of writing to congratulate him on his return to grace, and on the great good which his conversion would confer on the whole Church. It gives me pleasure to quote this letter, which ran as follows:—

"He who writes this letter to you is a bishop nearly worn out by infirmities, and the Sovereign Pontiff has condescended to allow him to resign the administration of his diocese of St. Agatha of the Goths. In my last days, at the advanced age of eighty-three, your conversion, which is as happy for you as it is satisfactory to all good Catholics, has been a subject of such great joy to me, that I cannot help writing you this letter, such as it is, to rejoice with you in the sincerity of my heart; for I sorrowed and groaned at seeing you abuse the truly great genius which you have received from God; and although I am the most worthless of men, I have frequently addressed prayers to God that this Father of mercies would cause you to abandon your error, and at length draw you to His love. That which I have so ardently longed for has come to pass. Your conversion (I speak as I feel) will be more advantageous to the Church than the redoubled labours of a hundred companies of missionaries could have been. In order that this common joy may be universal and complete, as well as to

take away the slightest doubt regarding your conversion, I should like you to write something as a refutation of your errors and of your sophisms. I should be very much more pleased still if you would use your pen against another modern writer, who has dared to attack the dogmas of the faith, to the great detriment of so many unfortunate young persons, who have been seduced by the love of independence, and have rashly sacrificed their soul and their God. I know that you suffer from your eyes; but the least thing from you will suffice as a reply to all who may labour to raise doubts as to the sincerity of the step you have taken. I shall therefore earnestly pray to God to give you strength, if not to write, at least to dictate, something against the unbelievers of our times..... I remain," &c.

It is well known that Voltaire's conversion was nothing but an unfounded rumour; and soon after Alphonso received at Naples the tidings of his conversion, he heard that he persisted in his obstinacy. Upon this the poor old man was chilled with surprise; he was on the point of sending his letter; he had to keep it back. "Such conversions," he then said, "are not ordinary graces; they are the effects of Divine mercy, but not of a common degree of mercy. God only grants blessings of this sort to those whose errors have arisen from a good intention, like those of St. Paul. But all is very bad in Voltaire." On the 30th of May, in this same year of 1778, Voltaire, who was always constant

in his errors, passed out of this life to the punishment of eternal condemnation. On the 2nd of July of the same year, his colleague in evil, Jean Jacques Rousseau, also died a sudden death. Alphonso heard of it from the Abbé D. Vincent Lupoli, who was afterwards Bishop of Cerreto. "I received the tidings of the death of the unhappy Rousseau," he replied on the 13th of September; "God be praised for having delivered the Church from two of its greatest enemies in so short a time!"

Alphonso had one source of consolation about this time, however. He had a very great esteem for Metastasio; he praised his talent and extolled his honesty, but he was grieved to see that his works, although they bore the semblance of modesty and decency, nevertheless inflamed the passions of the young. "Peter Metastasio," said he, "does more harm by his poems, although they are apparently chaste, than is caused by books which are openly immodest, for they are therefore proscribed; but Metastasio is read with pleasure, because he is modest; and thus a person's mind is beguiled and his heart perverted almost against his own will."

When he received certain tidings from Naples that Metastasio had become converted, and that he was aware of the great evil which his dramatical works had caused to youth, he said in one of his works,* "May I be permitted here to manifest the great joy which I have lately

* Spiritual Reflections, part 2, page 25.

experienced. I have been positively assured, that the celebrated Abbé Peter Metastasio, after having received so many praises for his poetry throughout all Europe, which is all the more dangerous from its being so very beautiful, because his tender and ardent expressions are thereby all the more calculated to kindle the flames of impure love in the heart, (I only allude to his profane poems,) I have been assured, I say, that he is going to publish a little book in prose, wherein he protests his profound repentance for his dangerous poetry, and the wish he has, if possible, to withdraw this kind of works from the hands of the public, at any price whatever, even at the expense of his own blood. In fact, I am assured that he does not now compose poetry, except some spiritual or moral dramas, which he is obliged to do in consequence of his office of poet to the court. It is also said that he leads quite a retired life spent in prayer and devotional exercises. This has given me unspeakable consolation, because this public declaration, and the great and good example he gives, will cause many misguided young people to think seriously, who have tried to gain a name and glory through amorous poems of a similar description. Assuredly, the celebrated Metastasio deserves more praises for this declaration, than if he had published a thousand brilliant pieces of poetry; for by that he would only have gained the praise of men, whilst now he has merited that of God. Thus, whilst I formerly detested the vanity which made him

glory in producing such compositions, I cannot now cease to praise him, and, were it in my power, I would kiss his feet on seeing him become the censor of his own works, and professing a wish to stop their circulation in the world, even at the price of his own blood, as he himself said."

Alphonso had such a horror of amorous poetry, which is so pernicious to youth, that he wept over it, and could not think of it without detesting such works and their authors. But as sacred poetry on the contrary produces good effects, when any remarkable composition of this kind came before him, he praised the authors, and tried to bring them into notice with as much zeal, as he blamed and cast discredit on the others. He was so taken with the translation of the Psalms by Xavier Maffei, that he was always praising the labours of this distinguished man. "If all occupied themselves thus," said he, "we should see lascivious poetry banish from the lips of the young." Maffei was full of gratitude for Alphonso's esteem for him and for his works, and did not forget to offer his thanks to him in the preface to his translation of the Psalms. On the 20th of November, 1774, Alphonso replied to him as follows: "It gives me great comfort to receive your little work on the Psalms. I keep your much esteemed letter before me whilst I am composing my work. It is fitted for the learned as well as for the ignorant, because it both instructs and pleases. Mine is only for the ignorant, and

has nothing attractive. Your translation has been applauded by the literary throughout all Italy, and I may even say throughout all Europe. What I have done is scarcely able to please even a small number of devout persons. I see what progress you make as a lawyer, but how much I should have preferred to see you continue to make use of the great talents and knowledge which God has given you, by exercising them for the good of His Church. However, even in the position in which you are you can do a great deal for the service of religion, since every one takes upon him to speak of theology and of the holy Scriptures, and to put forth whatever propositions he pleases."

CHAPTER XVI.

Prudence and confidence in God seemed to rival each other in Alphonso in the midst of the trying circumstances in which he was placed. He trusted in God, and he was sure of the Divine protection; but he did not omit to make use of all the human means which were calculated to assist him; and whilst our enemies moved heaven and earth to make sure of the protection of the royal council, Alphonso without acting with such great solicitude, wished that we should try to temporise, and thus gain a favourable decision. Such conduct excited every

one's admiration; and one knew not whether most to praise his patience in his labours, or his wisdom in regulating them.

When the procurator's report was remitted to the royal council, the agitation of our enemies can easily be imagined by every one. There was not one of the ministers upon whom they did not endeavour to prevail, through the reiterated mediation of those in power, and they interested even those in inferior offices in their cause. All their manœuvres were unsuccessful however, and could not mislead, because their spirit of hatred and intrigue was so manifest. As to Alphonso, he cast himself into the arms of Providence, and doubted not of the protection of God. "Jesus Christ," he wrote to Father Majone, on the 12th of April, 1779, "has wrought miracles in His persecutions, and I am sure that He will not permit His work to be destroyed, because it is so useful to poor sinners. Baron Sarnelli insists on its suppression, and the procurator Leon seconds him, by saying that we are useless; but God thinks otherwise, and I have the consolation of seeing thirty attestations of bishops attesting the good of our missions. I have received affecting accounts from Calabria, la Pouille, the Basilicate, the diocese of Benevento, Sicily, and the Campagna, regarding the numerous labours of our missionaries, and the good they effect. God be praised!"

He was told that Marshal Pignatelli and the Duchess of Montecalvo, interested themselves in our favour, and this comforted him extremely.

"I should never have imagined," he replied, "that the Lord would open this way for us; who knows whether God will not make use of these great people, in order to give peace to the congregation, and thus to cause them to receive merit by this means." Many bishops also, on seeing the danger we were in, did not fail to look after our interests. Mgr. Bergame, the bishop of Gaeta, went to Naples on purpose to speak to the President Cito, to Paoletti and to Salomone, who all three belonged to the royal council. Amongst other things, he said to them, "What will the poor bishops do if this congregation be taken away from them?"

Our greatest offence in the eyes of the procurator was, that contrary to the ordinance of the Catholic king, our houses formed real communities, with a rule and constitutions, and that besides other offices, we had a superior general and local superiors. To triumph over this truly specious accusation appeared an impossibility, even to our friends in the ministry. Alphonso was animated by his accustomed confidence, and presented a justification to the king for the minister at the head of ecclesiastical affairs. He declared that our enemies' assertions on this head were true; but that if the missionaries edified the people and did them a great deal of good, it was the result of the good order which existed in the government of the congregation; that there could neither be order nor subordination either in the houses or during the missions without respective superiors; that the young men

who were under training were necessary for the prepetuation of the work by replacing the old, and that in order to make them virtuous and fit for the ministry, there must necessarily be masters in order to instruct them in knowledge and to direct in spirituality.

The Marquis of Marco soon became convinced of Alphonso's uprightness, as well as of the evil intentions of his enemies, and so he hastened to set all this before the king. Nothing more was required in order to overthrow the formidable engine which the procurator had drawn up against us. "I stated to the king," the Marquis wrote to Alphonso, on the 21st of August, 1779, "the representations of your Lordship against the allegations tending to the destruction of the Congregation which you direct. His Majesty has commanded me to reply to you, that as the Catholic king, his august father, permitted the missionaries (of whom your Lordship is the head) to give missions and to live in the four houses of Ciorani, Nocera, Caposele, and Iliceto, and prescribed the means and conditions under which this great undertaking might be maintained, his Majesty also consents to there being a superior in the four above-named houses, to watch over the internal order therein, and to see that the other offices are properly distributed; and as it was the intention of the deceased Catholic king that this salutary work should never cease to exist, his Majesty also approves of young men being received and taught those things which shall be needful to enable them

to supply the place of those who have become incapacitated through great age, or any other reason."

When Alphonso received this royal decision, he hastened to write thus to Father Majone, on the 23rd of the same month: "Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto. Father Cimino has read to me the official despatch, for which I wish to have three masses said in thanksgiving. Let us then thank Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin, to whom I recommend this affair in a most special manner. I thank the Marquis of Marco, the grand-almoner, and also your Reverence, for you have all shown great zeal in transacting this important affair, and, finally, the clerk Vecchietti, who has aided you very much. I do not feel so well," he adds, "but I assure you that I shall die satisfied if Jesus Christ and the Madonna let me see peace restored to our congregation." He then wrote to Father Landi, saying, "I have been quite ill for several days. Pray to Jesus Christ to give me holy resignation: I wish for nothing more. Say a Salve Regina for nine days at night prayers, for a very important matter." Alphonso rejoiced at this act of clemency on the part of the sovereign, and so did all good people; the procurator advocate was enraged at it, and felt it most keenly. "If the Grand Duke of Tuscany had come here in person," he several times said, "he would not have obtained from the court what this handful of upstarts have got."

During this time Alphonso, in order to merit the favours which God heaped on him so abun-

dantly, seemed to forget all his infirmities in order to labour for the salvation of souls in every possible way. For six months, that is to say, from the 16th of December, the heavens had become like brass, and there had not been a drop of rain. All Nocera was in distress at this, fearing the loss of the corn and the fruit. Alphonso was moved at the sight of such a scourge, and wept over the sins of the people. One Sunday—it was the 13th of May, 1779—notwithstanding his weakness, he undertook to make a penitential procession, in order to obtain God's pardon and the favour which was so much longed for. After having put on his purple vestments, which he was never in the habit of doing, he covered himself with ashes; and accompanying his sons with a rope around his neck, he resolved to go and place a large cross in the parish church. The way was long, but all efforts to dissuade him from going were useless. It was with great difficulty that he was persuaded to go half the way in a carriage. He was determined to go the rest of the way on foot; and as his state of exhaustion no longer allowed him to walk without support, the lay-brother and others aided him in performing this painful pilgrimage.

All the inhabitants wished to assist at the ceremony, the church and the square were crowded with people. The principal gentlemen were eager to go and hear this new St. Charles Borromeo. In order to satisfy the people, the pulpit was placed at the church door, and as Al-

phonso was not able to ascend it, he was carried up to it. He preached for upwards of an hour upon the punishment which sinners deserve, and exhorted all his hearers to do penance. His words, added to such a touching spectacle, made a general impression, and on that very evening its salutary effects were seen by the great number of those who went to cast themselves at the feet of their confessors. But Heaven appeared to be insensible; the next day, after vespers, when Alphonso was returning from his accustomed drive, and had nearly reached our house, he ordered the coachman to turn back, and to go to the chapel where the Month of May was celebrated. When he arrived there, he got out of the carriage, entered the church, and went and prostrated himself before the altar of the Blessed Virgin. Nothing more was necessary to draw a crowd of people together. Alphonso caused the image of Mary to be exposed, and exhorted all present to have recourse to our Divine Mother. After he had prayed in silence for some time, he again turned towards the crowd: "Continue," said he to them, "to recommend yourself to the Madonna with confidence; confess and communicate this week, and you will have rain on Sunday." And so it was, for on the predicted day, just when it was least expected, and when the impatient people were murmuring and saying that his Lordship was mistaken for this time, a sudden change was seen to take place in the atmosphere, and the rain fell in such great abundance that all the country

was deluged. It was impossible not to see the favour which the Blessed Virgin had granted to the prayers of her servant; but as to Alphonso, it seemed almost a cause of confusion to him, and he said to us, when he returned, "The words I addressed to the people are taken as a prophecy: they merely escaped from me by chance however, for I am no prophet."

This prodigy soon became known at Naples, and Mgr. Liguori informed Abbé Nonnotte of it on the 29th of May, 1779.

I will now give another proof of his zeal. He had heard that the surgeon of the regiment which was quartered at Nocera was very ill, and that notwithstanding all the efforts of the Capuchin fathers, he was dying in an impenitent state. He hastened to send some of our fathers to him; but as all their efforts were also without success, he determined to drag himself to the abode of the dying man, as he was uneasy about the salvation of his soul. The poor old man endeavoured to bring him out of his blindness for upwards of an hour; but all was in vain. This hardened unbeliever tried to find rest, and finding none, he frequently said, "Oh, what a misfortune! What do I want with this old man?" This miserable being did not admit either revelation or redemption. Alphonso at length saw the inutility of his exhortations, and said, with tears in his eyes, to the Capuchin fathers who were present, "I leave him in the hands of the devil; pray for him, however, and do not leave him." The unhappy man died, but in

impenitence; he unceasingly repeated in his last moments, "Causa causarum, salva me!" Alphonso whilst deploring the loss of this soul, could not help adoring the judgments of God. "Grace," said he, "costs much to him who refuses it."

If the death of this unfortunate being was a subject of regret to Alphonso, he had an increase of consolation in the conversion of another soldier; he had faith, but would not go to confession, although laden with iniquities. His Lordship was moved to compassion on hearing this, and so he repaired to his quarters. He succeeded this time, and made him think seriously, and won him over to Jesus Christ. He was so pleased at the conversion of this soul, that in the sermon he delivered in our church on the following Saturday, he said that the Blessed Virgin alone had saved this sinner, and he wished the people to thank Mary for it.

CHAPTER XVII.

Providence, who never loses sight of His children, did not fail to protect Alphonso from the wicked designs of the procurator. Whilst the debate and the particulars regarding the offences alleged against us were before the royal council, the king adopted a new course, which put the finishing stroke to our enemies' confusion, and to

the procurator's dejection. The latter had declaimed with fury against the Moral Theology of Mgr. Liguori, and he had drawn from this the most arbitrary consequences; but this perfidy was again baffled. Alphonso's doctrine and his piety were well known at the court, as well as his zeal and his attachment to the Church and State. The king had obtained leave to celebrate the jubilee in his kingdom from Pope Pius VI., on the 21st of November, 1777. His Majesty principally selected Mgr. Liguori and his missionaries to announce the attendant spiritual graces. On the 22nd of October of the following year, the Marquis of Sambuca wrote to him thus: "In consideration of the constant labours of the missionaries of the Most Holy Redeemer, which tend to instruct the people, and to their being led to true piety, and of the solicitude with which they everywhere disseminate good principles, which are calculated to form virtuous Christians and faithful citizens, his Majesty has determined to make use of the zeal of your Congregation to publish a jubilee, the only object of which is the salvation of the faithful and the good of the State. Therefore, the king has commanded me to let your Lordship know, that in return for the happy success which will attend the labours of your missionaries in this respect, he will not fail to give you proofs of his royal gratitude."

Alphonso was quite abashed at such an honourable mandate. He seconded the piety of the king by his own zeal, and addressed us on the 8th

of November in a circular, in which he sets forth the excellence of this work and its utility for the good of souls. "My brothers," said he, "you now see that our most pious and most religious monarch counsels and commands nothing but the accomplishment of the end of our institute, that is to say, the instruction of the people in their duties towards the Most High God, towards the prince, their neighbour, and themselves. So religious a work, the principal object of which is the welfare of the Church, and the good of the State, and which also procures all the advantages we have named, ought not only not to be looked on with indifference, but to be seconded in every possible way by those who are called on to procure the furtherance of the glory of God, the salvation of their neighbour, and that of the state."

This honour from the king was an explicit contradiction of all the calumnies of the procurator. Alphonso was grateful for all these blessings, and wished that due thanks should be offered to God for them.

On the 24th of January, 1779, he wrote to all his houses, to direct that every evening after the examination, the following prayers should be said at three different intervals, each time being divided by a Pater, an Ave, and a Gloria, and he wished them to recite them in a loud and intelligible tone of voice: "What have I desired in heaven or on the earth but Thee, Oh, thou God of my heart and my portion for eternity!" "My Jesus, I devote myself wholly

to Thee; I wish for nothing but Thee; I wish for nothing more." "Prayer," said he unceasingly, "is all-powerful with God."

The honourable preference which the king bestowed on our missionaries made the procurator quite furious. If he felt pain at the king's first decree, in which he sanctioned the order which was established in the congregation, which was exactly contrary to the conclusions of his report; the second was a real torment to him. That which filled him with the bitterest sorrow was, the promise the king made us of future liberality. "Strange fancy," exclaimed he, "it would seem as if scandal is to be made lawful and even rewarded, although it causes ruin to the State and to the Church." He lost all self-control, and spoke without any restraint wherever he went; he spoke against the royal minister, whom he censured, for having promulgated such a decree; he lost courage, as well as the commissioner, who had also undertaken to destroy us, but they made one last effort in despair of the cause; they entreated the royal council for a new appeal, hoping that at least the baron might then be able to recover his property, and that they might thus escape entire confusion.

But neither the procurator nor the commissioner saw the end of this affair. I do not here pretend to enter into the secret judgments of God, but so it was that they both were prematurely cited before the tribunal of Jesus Christ: the one died on coming out of a bath, without being able to have the sacraments ad-

ministered to him, and the other was found dead in his carriage, without any one having been able to do anything for him. As the other baron's supporters disappeared in this manner, he had no longer any heart nor strength to go on with his wicked prosecutions.

Alphonso was, as we have already seen, extremely interested in the mission in Sicily. He deplored the loss of the Jesuits, which had been sustained there, where they had done so much good; and as he was then in favour with the prince, he turned his thoughts thither with redoubled solicitude. He was nevertheless distressed at not having subjects enough to satisfy the numerous demands of both the bishops of the kingdom and of those of Sicily. "My God," he was heard to exclaim, "messis multa, operarii panci." However, as many of our young priests were nearly at the end of their course of theology in our house of St. Angelo, he wrote to them on the 16th of August, 1779, in order to encourage them to the apostleship, and to inspire them with a love for missions. His letter was as follows:

"My dear brothers, I hope that you faithfully preserve the desire to belong wholly to Jesus Christ; it is a desire which you conceived on entering the congregation, and which you have more specially renewed at the time of the oblation by which you were entirely consecrated to the love of Jesus Christ. I therefore wish to let you know that our Father Lauria has come from Girgenti, and has told us that his com-

panions in Sicily are not numerous enough to supply the wants not only of this diocese, but of several others besides; for the Archbishop of Palermo, Mgr. San Severino, also wishes for us, particularly for the diocese of Morreale. They therefore wish for two more of our fathers at the least, in order to assist in giving the missions which these people so ardently desire. Girgenti alone numbers more than two hundred thousand souls. This being so, and as you are on the point of terminating your studies, I should like to know which of you would like to go to Sicily, where our missions produce such great fruits. I will most specially remember the brothers who shall be the first to offer themselves for this glorious work; meanwhile I bless you one and all, and I entreat you to remember me every day before the blessed Sacrament, as the hour of my death is at hand."

CHAPTER XVIII.

The greatest evil which our enemies did to the congregation, although they had it not at all in view themselves, was the interior derangement and relaxation in the regular observance of rule, which resulted from what they did; some took advantage of these troubles to have their own way, and to the great regret of the superiors they were forced to bear with this;

for if they offered any reprimand, the reply was quite ready. The rule, they said, was not obligatory, when deprived as it was of the royal sanction. If the expulsion of an incorrigible subject were wished for, it was still worse. They pretended to brave the rule and still to preserve the honour of wearing the habit; they even threatened to have recourse to some authority against us, though what I cannot tell. There were even some discontented individuals, (but God did not suffer them to remain long in His house) who seconded the enemies of the congregation, by supplying them with weapons wherewith to combat it.

As the pilot after the tempest causes all the damages which the vessel has sustained to be repaired, and gets the rigging renewed, so Alphonso, after the defeat of our enemies, had given place to the good graces of the sovereign, occupied himself in remedying the injuries which the observance of rule had sustained. He became inflamed with zeal, and rigorously required that discipline should be respected. "In the congregation," said he, "one must either edify or go."

"As the king has been so good," he wrote in one of his circulars to the local superiors, "as not to listen to the accusations of our enemies, and as there is at present less to fear from insubordinate subjects, I require that each one be compelled to the most exact observance of our rule. All have embraced it from their own choice; besides, we do not keep any one by

force; if there are any who repent of having come amongst us, let them settle the question with God. I am ready to dispense them from their vow. Better is it for us to be few, but good; those who are not so are always a burthen; they injure themselves and do harm to others. I advise you to exercise prudence and vigour towards all, but not weakness, to the injury of the rule and to cause public scandal."

When a river which has been inclosed and stopped in its course, succeeds in escaping and in making an opening, it breaks over its bounds, and carries away all that opposes its passage; thus Alphonso, after having seen the rule given up as a prey to contradiction for several years, on now seeing these obstacles overthrown, gave free course to his zeal for the observance of rule. Without respect of persons, he set himself to correct what was wrong, and to give both verbal and written warnings to the rectors as well as to the subjects; he insisted on his point, and never rested until he was satisfied; he was resolved to dismiss all the rebellious spirits from the congregation, and he unceasingly prayed to God for this end.

"I daily ask of Jesus Christ," said he in a letter, "that He will send away all those subjects who give scandal to the rest, and dishonour the congregation." Several of those to whom the yoke of the religious life seemed too heavy, returned into the world, and Alphonso, whilst he deplored their misfortune, was more consoled at

their departure than at the reception of those who were fervent.

Some had taken the liberty to retire to their homes on frivolous pretexts. During the troubles which had arisen Father Villani had shut his eyes to a great many things, in order to prevent still greater evils. Alphonso grieved bitterly over this, and he had complained of it to this father before his resignation. As soon as peace was restored, he took the most efficacious measures to cause all the subjects to return to their respective houses.

Amongst those who would not obey there was one whom he punished in a severe manner. He manifested extreme attachment to the interests of his family, which he maintained before the courts of law at Naples in a dishonourable manner. Alphonso recalled him, but he did not obey. As he was afraid of being expelled, he got Don Stephen Patrizzio, the president of the royal council, to intercede for him, and through his medium he obtained the aid of Mgr. Sanfelice, the Bishop of Nocera. Alphonso delayed, but on seeing that he was incorrigible he ultimately sent him away. "I pity this unhappy man," he then said; "God knows how to punish these wilfully deaf persons, who set no value on their vocation." In fact, this subject, who afterwards became a priest, was always occupied about the fortune of his nephews, and whilst I am writing these lines, I hear that he has been miserably assassinated on account of usury, which he had boldly practised in favour of his ward.

This is not to say that Alphonso did not exercise circumspection in warning these imprudent persons. Father Don Matthias Corrado, who was much respected for the numerous services he had rendered to the congregation, had remained at home for some time, that he might breathe his native air, which was good for his health, as it had been in a bad state for some time. Alphonso could not tolerate an example so contrary to the rule, so he prudently wrote to him as follows: "I have let all the subjects know that they must each return to the house assigned to him within fifteen days. I have sent this announcement to all, couched in the same terms and in the same form. However, as I have a peculiar degree of esteem for you, I take the trouble of addressing a separate letter to you, different from the others. I do not write to tell you that you must positively return in the space of fifteen days; I only beg you to let me know what necessity there is for your Reverence remaining with your relations, since, according to the rule, we cannot remain at our homes, except in case of the death of our father or of our mother. My dear Don Bartholomew, as your Reverence is one of the oldest fathers, your example will cause the more harm, and will be a precedent for the others. We have different houses, and if the air of one does not suit a subject, he may be sent to another. I have written all this to your Reverence to show you my esteem and affection for you. I do not fix the period of fifteen days for you, but I beg you at least to write and tell me the reason

which keeps you in the world, because I shall exercise all possible indulgence towards you, provided it be a reasonable one, for I must give some kind of reason for your absence. I have for some time wanted to beg you to come and remain with me at Nocera, where I am superior, in the midst of difficulties, and in continual need of some prudent person whose advice I can ask; for this reason I wanted to get you to come to me when I heard that you had gone to your parents. I entreat you to let me hear from you, and to console me by your answer."

The following is an instance of Alphonso's firmness in requiring submission to superiors. He had fixed that two fathers should be removed from the house at Ciorani to that of Iliceto; but the superior objected to parting with these two subjects, so Alphonso wrote thus to him: "I think that your Reverence will not find anything to object to in the orders that I give you, but that on the contrary you will obey them promptly: call to your own mind, as well as those of the fathers, that you have made a vow of obedience. By the authority which God has given me, I will and even command, that as soon as you receive this, you will arrange everything that is necessary for their departure. I imagine that your Reverence will not find any difficulty in this; but, however, this may be, I will it to be thus, and I positively command it to be done. If I wish to be obeyed, it is not through vainglory, but for the glory of God." Here is another instance of the same firmness. Contrary

to his orders and to those of the local superior, a father took some liberty, (I know not what,) whilst giving the spiritual exercises in a convent of nuns. "Your Reverence must give this father a sharp reprimand," wrote Alphonso to the rector on hearing of it; "I have not wished to dismiss him, as he has deserved as a punishment for his fault, and also for his habitual obstinacy; but tell him in my name, that I shall be obliged to do it the first time he again commits a fault of a similar nature. I think that it arises from his going out too much. Your Reverence must therefore not send him into the world any more, or allow him to go out again, unless you have my written consent for it, and you must not continue his faculties, because he must have forgotten the little he knew by going about from place to place in this way, without ever studying Moral Theology; and this makes me afraid to allow him to continue as a confessor."

Alphonso felt great uneasiness on hearing that some of the fathers in the house at Ciorani neglected the study of Moral Theology; and as he could do anything with the Archbishop of Salerno, he wrote to Father Deodatus Crisinoli, who was the superior of this house, as follows: "I inform all the fathers who have their faculties from Mgr. the archbishop, that I wish them to make use of them during the whole month of September; but at the beginning of this same month your Reverence and the prefect of the cases of conscience must give me an account of the way in which the fathers apply to the study

of Moral Theology, and of the manner in which they have gone through the theological conferences and the practical exercises of the confessional." He also charged the rector and the prefect to give him a conscientious and sincere account, without any human respect.

On hearing that a subject entertained too loose opinions, he positively forbade him from hearing confessions, and he was so strict with him, that he himself asked to be released from the vows and from the oath of perseverance.

He also dismissed another father in a similar manner, who would not conquer a certain levity of conduct.

He would not allow the local superiors to question any of the measures he adopted. He recalled the father-minister of the house of Sicily into the kingdom; the rector complained of it, and Alphonso replied to him with much dissatisfaction: "When I make any change I beg you first to inquire into everything, and after that you may complain. I have reflected much, and asked advice a hundred times, before coming to this resolution. You must have a little more subjection and obedience if you wish to be pleasing to Jesus Christ." The cupola of the church of the house at Ciorani was in a bad state, and as the professional men did not agree as to the measures to be taken regarding it, each of the fathers of this house offered his opinion in the matter. Alphonso was distressed at their want of agreement, and testified his displeasure in these term on the 8th of

December, 1779: "I do not act through obstinacy, but I see that you do so, and that you allow yourselves to be led by party spirit; it is to me, who am superior-general and head of the congregation, that it appertains to decide whether it is necessary to demolish or not, and you who are not superior-generals, have nothing to do but to obey. I wish that you were all anxious for nothing but to look attentively at the star which guides you, because if you turn your eyes away from obedience, it is all over with the congregation, and we shall see nothing more but trouble and confusion. He who contradicts, declares himself an enemy of the congregation. But, it will be said, We do not think thus; is there then no one to decide? can every one do it? That matters little to me, who am at the end of my course, and hope to be saved by the blood of Jesus Christ and the goodness of Mary; but you, you will one day weep over the ruin of the congregation, when you can no longer remedy it. Rest assured that if the authority of the superior-general once be destroyed, the authority of the local superiors will be so also. I bless your Reverence and all the fathers who are not superior-generals."

As we have already said, in Alphonso firmness was never severed from prudence. On hearing that a subject disliked going on mission, he did not give him any definite order to do so, as he feared a refusal; but once when this father was in his room with the others, he dexterously began to speak of the value of obedience, and of the

injury which he who is intractable inflicts on himself; this caused the father to reflect seriously, and he of himself offered to do what was wished.

When the resistance proceeded rather from nature than from the will, Alphonso had compassion on the weakness of the man, and was able by his gentleness to soften the bitterness of the command by his own gentleness. On one occasion he warned and reproved the superior of a house in the states of Benevento, who took the matter so ill that he threatened to quit his post and to return into the kingdom. "I have received your letter," Alphonso replied to him; "in one part you console me, and in another you distress me. I find therein certain words which I did not expect from your submission, and your love for obedience. You say 'I am resolved to return to the kingdom.' I pity you, for I see that you wrote these words in distress of mind. I hope that you have repented of them now, for certainly such words and thoughts are not pleasing to Jesus Christ. My letter could not have provoked such language, because I wrote it with all the affection I have ever felt towards you; and then you say, some think that you are of a peevish temper, as Father Villani has told you. But did not your piety demand that you should have received this mortification peacefully, and the more so because you know how much I esteem and love you? Father Villani gave me a similar reprimand myself; but, thank God, I received it quietly, and it

has caused me to be more moderate and humble: let there then be nothing more about my letter, nor that of Father Andrew."

CHAPTER XIX.

Although Alphonso was so detached from all concern about the temporal interests of his relations, he had their spiritual welfare proportionably at heart. In the midst of his difficulties and sufferings, the cares of his congregation never hindered him from watching over the happiness of his nephews; whilst they were at the college of the nobles, he heard that his brother Hercules had begun a matrimonial negociation for Don Joseph the eldest, with the heiress of Counsellor Vespoli. The boy was not then thirteen years old; but Don Hercules was aged, and was anxious to see his son settled before his death. When Alphonso heard this marriage spoken of he exclaimed in a sorrowful manner, "Ah! my little Joseph is going to lose the grace of God;" and on Father Villani's adding that the thing would remain a secret between Don Hercules and the counsellor, Alphonso replied, "If but one of the servants hears of it, that will be enough to cause little Joseph also to know it soon himself; the children of the great are lost through servants, through valets de chambres

and coachmen; they will now say to him, 'Good news, little Joseph, papa has found a pretty young lady for you;' and a thousand other improper remarks: it is thus that children get irremediably corrupted." He was so uneasy, that he wanted to write to Don Hercules immediately; but as one of our fathers had to go to Naples, he commissioned him to tell his brother from him how displeased he was, and to represent to him that he ran a certain danger of causing his son to be out of favour with God. "It is evil," added he, "it is evil, it will not do; I can see nothing in it but enmity and offence to God."

Don Hercules tried to justify himself. Alphonso replied to him on the 4th of September, 1774, as follows: "I received your second letter, but I know not how to answer you. Little Joseph is too young to think of marrying, and from what I hear, the girl is also very young. It is a very dangerous thing to treat about a marriage which cannot be realised under six or seven years at least. I am old, and to-day or to-morrow I shall find myself in another world; you are also advanced in age. If Joseph be left to himself, and is settled at the age of fifteen or sixteen, I know not what course he may adopt. Do not, I repeat, let little Joseph know anything about this marriage; but I fear that he knows of it already. I rejoice that he is at college, because, were he at home, some servant or other would be sure to speak to him of this marriage, and to cause him to lose the

grace of God by occasioning him to have bad thoughts."

As the children of Don Hercules were old enough to distinguish between good and evil, Alphonso wrote them on the 4th of April, 1780, a long letter full of instruction and wise counsels:

"My dearest Nephews,

"I expected to see you here, that I might give you my last blessing and my last counsels, for it is a miracle of the goodness of the Lord that I have still some days longer yet to live to weep for my sins, but God be ever blessed, who has not granted me this consolation, which I do not merit. I bless you then at a distance, and I give you my blessing with all my heart, praying our good God to bless you also from heaven on high, and to shed His holy fear and love in your tender hearts. May He give you that enduring love which will conduct you to that blessed eternity where I, through the mercy of God, will await you. Strive to fear God as your Master, but still more to love Him as your Father. That is a most sweet title, and one which you daily apply to Him in the Lord's prayer, when you say, 'Our Father!' Yes, He is your Father; love Him then with tenderness. He is your Father, He is good, gentle, loving, tender, bountiful, and merciful; from how many other reasons ought you not to love this Father with a sincere affection, with tenderness and gratitude! Happy will you be if you love Him

with sincerity of heart, from your earliest infancy; the yoke of the Lord will not then seem hard to you; it will be sweet to you, and you will love His holy law. Be careful to overcome your unruly passions, and to overcome the enemies of your soul. The habit of doing good will become strengthened by degrees, until you will at last find it easy and pleasant to do that which is disagreeable and difficult to those who have fallen into sin. Love God, my dear little children; I call you my children, both because I love you with all the tenderness and love of a father, and because I wish to cause holy charity to increase in your soul. My children, love, O love the Lord your God, and our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ; but love them much, and be jealously careful to preserve this love in your heart by the fear of losing it. The loss of the love of God, of His grace and of His friendship, is a great loss. Be humble; he who is humble flies from dangers, and in involuntary temptations he has recourse to God with confidence; by that he preserves Divine love. He who is proud easily falls into sin and offence against God. Without humility, you will either never do any real good and never have real virtue, or you will easily lose what you have. God resists the proud and shows mercy towards the humble. God looks upon them with an eye of compassion, and they are His friends. If you examine yourselves carefully you will not be proud, because you will always find causes for humiliation in yourselves. You are well-born,

but this is the gift of God; you are in a college, governed by superiors full of zeal and wisdom, and who are as distinguished by their virtues as by their high birth; you receive a good education there under the guidance of wise, learned, and exemplary masters; but all that is still a benefit you receive from the Lord. You are always in the grace of God, I hope; but this also is entirely the result of the divine goodness. In a word, all the good you have is the gift of Providence, but this only makes you more indebted to His goodness, and you ought not to be vain about it. If after all this, you think of all the faults you commit, and they are what really belong to yourselves, you will find something to humble you at all times. Obey your superiors with humility, love, and gratitude, for whether they give you lessons, whether they caress or correct you, they equally give you proofs of the charitable affection of their hearts towards you; for though the corrections may displease you, they only proceed from the love these good religious feel towards you. Obey them as so many fathers, since your own father has entrusted you to their care, and has given them to you in his stead. Obey them, respect them, and love them as you ought to obey your own father, and to respect and to love him. I hope that you will do it in order to please God, your father, and me. I have been pained at hearing that you do not apply much to your studies. Oh my children, you would weep, if you understood how much evil you do! Ignor-

ance and idleness are the fruitful sources of sin and vice. Study then with care, with application, and pains-taking attention, in order that you may know God, His benefits, and His rewards, and in order to be able to contemplate and love Him much. He who is ignorant knows little of God and His benefits, if he knows them at all, nor of the obligations and the duties which the Lord has imposed upon him; this is why he does evil. Study then, and give me before I die the consolation of hearing that you have profited by my advice. I am at the end of my days, and I know not if you may see me again; let these last exhortations be engraved in your tender hearts, and let them produce the fruit I desire; read my long letter, and ask for an explanation of what you do not understand, imprint it in your memory, in order that you may put in practice all that I have told you. Love God much. Study in order to know Him, and then in order to love Him more and more. Preserve this holy love in your hearts as well as humility, obey your superiors and your father with docility. Attend to the rules of the college in order to please God. Be devout towards the Blessed Virgin Mary; I leave you under her care and protection. I recommend you to her with the most ardent affection, and I bless you in Jesus Christ, in order that you may be His in time and in eternity, which I hope you will be."

Alphonso thus fulfilled by anticipation the office of father in regard to the children of his brother,

whom death was soon to take from them. Alphonso had had a presentiment of this misfortune three months before, though Don Hercules was then robust and in perfect health. One day when his Lordship was meditating according to custom, extended in his arm-chair, he suddenly turned towards Father Costanzo and said to him, "Hercules will cause me sorrow this year." After saying these words he remained silent; no importance was attached to them; it was even thought to be but a dream; but it was not so, for in three months afterwards, on the 8th of September, 1789, Don Hercules expired of a death which was as violent as it was unexpected.

Alphonso was always united to the will of God, so he received the tidings with calmness. "Good God!" he exclaimed; he then clasped his hands, and was silent. When he heard that Don Hercules had left the advocate Don Peter Gavotti as tutor to his son, but under his authority and that of Counsellor Don Nicholas Vespoli their relation, he felt comfort. Don Gavotti was a respectable man, and much attached to the family of the Liguoris. As soon as Alphonso heard this news, he immediately wrote to him, not so much in order to urge him to attend to the temporal interests of his nephews as to that of their religious education. When he sent for Father Costanzo to write the letter for him, the latter recollected the prediction he had heard him utter. "Is it not true, my father," he said to him, "that this is the sorrow which Don Hercules was soon to cause you?" But his Lord-

ship interrupted him, and said, "Go and write;" and he instantly dictated the letter to him.

This office was a cause of happiness to Don Gavotti, he at this time was almost always suffering from such violent sick headaches, that he could scarcely go through his ordinary occupations. "I am quite at your service," he replied to his Lordship, "and I will devote myself as far as I can to the good of your nephews, but your Lordship must pray to God to deliver me from the headache which continually afflicts me." "Take great care of these little children," Alphonso replied to him, "and be sure that God will relieve you." Don Gavotti has attested that when he received this letter, he felt instantly cured, and he never suffered again from this malady as long as he lived. In gratitude for this benefit he felt it a duty to be at all times most solicitous for the welfare of his pupils.

The saintly old man was no less interested about the future of the young Donna Theresa, as he was eager to secure her eternal salvation. She was sixteen years of age at this time, and a pensioner at the convent of St. Marcelline. Alphonso looked upon her as one of the things which was the dearest to his heart. "At this age of eighty-five years," he wrote to her, "I have become incapable of doing anything myself; but when you require anything, let me know, and I will get it done for you by others. Do not forget to recommend me to Jesus Christ, and if any one advises you to leave the convent, and to go and throw yourself into a preci-

pice, that is to say, to be married, do not listen to such counsel, for you will certainly repent of it the second day. Think about saving your soul, for that is the only thing which is important and necessary. Take the advice of a good confessor and of some nun of exemplary life. I will recommend you to Jesus Christ, in order that He may cause you to adopt that course which is the most likely to save you, and do you on your part recommend me to Mary, for my death cannot be far off."

His Lordship's only wish was to see his niece consecrated to Jesus Christ, and he neglected nothing in order to preserve her vocation. In a letter to Antonia Liguori, his cousin, he said, "Remember me to my niece, Donna Theresa, and tell her not to let herself be misled by the world so as to abandon Jesus Christ, because that would be a misfortune to her throughout all her life, and her greatest misfortune at the hour of death. Few ladies now-a-days live in the world and are saved. She must not neglect communion or prayer, and she must occupy herself in spiritual reading. I am afraid lest she should have got some attendant at the convent whose head is full of the world. I thank your Reverence for watching over her. I thought that she would soon have requested to become a nun, but I fear this thought has been put out of her mind."

Not satisfied with this, he also wrote to Don Gavotti to urge him to attend to her vocation also. See how he expresses himself in his let-

ter of the 18th of November: "In regard to my niece, Donna Theresa, your pupil, I want to tell you that I am distressed about her, because at first her only aspiration was to become a religious, and now she does not say any more about it to me. I am afraid that she wishes to marry. I do not hesitate to say that she will very likely be damned if she does; for now-a-days married women are saved with difficulty, for generally all married women live mostly in sin, on account of the temptations to which they are exposed. I have begged her confessor to be most careful in making her become a nun, and I also beg you to assist him in this, because if she marries, in this corrupt age, I shall look upon her as lost." We have to regret the loss of other letters which Alphonso wrote to Don Vespoli and to Don Gavotti.

On the 25th of April, he wrote thus to his young niece: "Yes, my niece, I will continue to pray for your vocation, as you ask me to do, and I will remind you that some years ago, whilst your father was still alive, you had the wish to be espoused to Jesus Christ. There was then once a time when you was far from wishing to give yourself to the world. I pray Jesus Christ to strengthen you in this holy resolution, for if you change your mind, you will have difficulty in persevering in the grace of God. What I have here told you, I have said to all the young ladies of rank who have come to consult me, and I have made them

see that if they renounce Jesus Christ, they will have difficulty in attaining eternal happiness. The world at present is nothing but corruption, and as far as I can see, all ladies who frequent worldly society, usually lose the favour of God. Be careful therefore not to leave Jesus Christ for the world, because you would thereby lose Jesus Christ and your own soul. By God's grace, all my relations who have died within my time have made good ends, and I hope to go and rejoin them in Paradise, where we shall one day live altogether."

Alphonso obtained what he so ardently desired. Donna Theresa soon declared that she wished to embrace the religious life; she even made use of force in order to obtain this consolation. Councillor Vespoli however, from the young lady's only being eighteen years of age, could not make up his mind to give his consent, especially as it was contrary to the will of her deceased father, who had said that she was not to take the veil before the age of twenty. She insisted upon it, and as Don Gavotti also opposed it, Alphonso did not fail to second her. He several times endeavoured to make Don Vespoli and Don Gavotti see that this was not a mere fancy in his niece, but an efficacious will to embrace the religious state. He set before them the instability of the human heart, and the dangers to which his niece would be exposed by deferring it any longer, and his reasons were so persuasive that all opposition ceased.

But Alphonso's anxieties did not end there. The young lady had to leave the convent, according to custom, before entering on the noviciate. "Instead of entrusting her to her relations," his Lordship applied to his penitent the Duchess of Bovino, who was well known for her extreme goodness. "If we place her in the house of her parents," said Alphonso, "she will incur a thousand dangers; there will be parties, theatres, and soirées; this will be quite enough to cause her to lose her vocation." The duchess willingly consented to receive Donna Theresa into her house, and she left the convent on the 16th of February, 1781. During this time Alphonso took care to give her prudent counsels to warn her to be on her guard. "I advise you to exercise the holy love of God," he wrote to her, "as well as modesty and detachment from the things of earth. I specially and urgently entreat you to shun festivities and other amusements of the kind, which are but too dangerous. I particularly beg you not to go to the theatre. The duchess will I am sure be of my opinion; communicate it to her, and you will see how far she is from wishing to amuse you at the expense of your soul." The duchess went for her, accompanied by her daughter the Duchess of Caramanica, by her husband the duke, and by Donna Theresa's two young brothers, D.D. Joseph and Alphonso. The only recreation she asked for was to go to Nocera to kiss the hand of her uncle.

Although the visits of ladies were usually dis-

agreeable to Alphonso, that of his niece was however an exception, and gave him the greatest pleasure. The duchess and her daughter staid at Nocera three days. As his Lordship was in the enjoyment of the pension from the Church of St. Agatha, he might have received and entertained them with some degree of sumptuousness, but the love of poverty prevailed as usual. All the presents he gave them were confined to copies of the Visits of the Blessed Sacraments, and of the Preparation for Death, as well as a relic in a little box of no value.

Donna Theresa had been suffering from a wound in her leg for six months. When Alphonso heard of it, he was much distressed at it; and when she knelt down and asked him for his blessing on taking leave of him, he said to her, "I bless you as your uncle and as bishop." This took place in the morning, and in the evening when the wound was unbandaged at Naples, the surgeon, the duchess, and the other members of the household were much astonished at seeing that it was entirely healed, to their great admiration.

On the 16th of June, 1781, Donna Theresa returned to the convent. Alphonso made it a point with Don Gavotti that her entrance into the noviciate, as well as her religious profession, should be celebrated with modest magnificence. The first ceremony was adorned by a concourse of the first nobility of Naples. Donna Theresa wished his Lordship to assist at her profession. "Your last letter," Alphonso replied to her, "has

given me such great comfort, that I have been unable to restrain my tears: I am sad at being unable to comply with your wishes. If God had granted me power to witness your sacrifice, I should certainly have done nothing but shed tears of joy; but He has not granted me this consolation. I do not cease to recommend you to Jesus Christ, that He may inflame you wholly with His divine love, and that you may one day see Him face to face in Paradise. I beg of you often to pray for me to Jesus Christ, that He may aid me to die well, for my sins fill me with great fear regarding my eternal salvation. I bless you, and I will not allow any morning to pass without thinking of you at holy communion, in order that Jesus Christ may unite you wholly to Himself." It was necessary to give a present to Donna Theresa, and his Lordship did not forget to do so. "I send you this picture of the Blessed Virgin," he said to her, "to remind you to thank her, and unceasingly to implore her protection."

Alphonso manifested as much indifference regarding the establishment of his nephew Don Joseph, as he had shown interest in his niece's entrance into religion. When he was of an age to marry, Alphonso entirely referred the matter to Councillor Vespoli and to Don Gavotti. He however advised them not to constrain him, but to choose a wife for him of exemplary conduct, and of suitable birth. When Don Joseph went himself to inform him of the conclusion of his marriage, his Lordship received the news with

indifference; he then gave him his blessing, and said to him, "I pray God to bless you also." He then gave him some good advice, and sent him away satisfied.

CHAPTER XX.

It was about this time that Alphonso finally revised his Moral Theology, taking the greatest care to avoid either too severe or too lax opinions; he thus expressed himself on this subject as far back as in the year 1773: "I have written against those authors who are too lax, to prevent an excessive liberty of thought being introduced into Christian Morality; and I have written against those authors who are too rigorous, to prevent false consciences, and to save souls from the danger of being lost. I know that the partisans of the two extremes will be dissatisfied with me and will censure me; but the only end I have had in view has been the glory of God and the good of souls." The following are his own words: "Testor Deum, cujus honorem et animarum salutem mihi proposui, quod quidquid scripserim, non ab aliquâ passione impulsus aut verbis aliquorum auctorum addictus, vel austeritati aut benignitati nimis adhærens, ad hæc scribenda me induxi." "He who talks of a party," he added, "speaks of passion and intrigue. He who writes on these subjects ought to have the glory of

God and the good of souls in view, and not at all his own glory or that of a party. When one treats of sin, it does not do to set consciences free when they should not be so, any more than to burthen them unreasonably." He particularly detested the whole party of the Jansenists. "Hell," said he, "could not have found a better method of ruining the Church and of losing souls. I should like to know what good these pestilential people have done with their rigorism. What they call zeal is in truth nothing but party-spirit. Jesus Christ never meant that people should labour for His glory by rendering the yoke of His law heavier than He Himself has made it. Who does not see that the Jansenists, by their severity, only render Jesus Christ and His law odious?"

He bitterly deplored the delusion of some good Catholics who allowed themselves to be deceived by this seducing rigour. "I am persuaded," said he, "that they do not wish to profess Jansenism, since it has been condemned by the Church; but how many are there who give in to this error on account of a specious appearance of piety, and of primitive fervour! If they are not Jansenists by profession, they are so at least by practice; such is the morality now in vogue; and such persons do more harm to souls, than could be done by the most perfidious Jansenists; for whilst the latter are shunned as open heretics, little mistrust is felt for the others whose zeal is praised. The fact is, that whilst they wish for a rigorous spirit in others, they

do not at least wish for it for themselves; and this is an evident proof of their deceitfulness. Jesus Christ "began to do and to teach;" it was thus that the apostles acted, and thus all apostolic men also act. Heretics alone boast of being what they are not, and impose burthens on others which they will not carry in the least themselves."

Such upright intentions as these, must always be accompanied by the blessing of Heaven. Alphonso's Morals obtained such a high reputation amongst all the most civilized nations, that they were spread throughout Europe. Even during his lifetime there were seven editions of this work published at Naples and at Venice, and each one contained a great many copies; and now, whilst I am writing this, (1802,) Remondini has published the tenth. It has been spread not only throughout Italy, but also in Germany, Poland, Spain, Portugal, and Switzerland. The sale was so great, that it was reprinted as far as in Spain.

Alphonso published an Apology for his System of Morals, as we have already seen, and his work gained more credit in consequence. When he himself sent a copy to Palermo to Father Sapio of the Oratory, he said to him, "Many demands for my Apology are made at Rome and in other parts of Italy, so that I shall be obliged to have it reprinted."

Not satisfied with his large edition of the Moral Theology, which is now published in three volumes at Venice, and which he dedicated to

Pope Benedict XIV., he made an Abridgment of it in three small volumes, in Italian, for the convenience of young confessors. This work was so much sought for throughout all Italy, that it was several times reprinted at Venice and at Naples, and the tenth edition is now being sold at Bassano, (1802,) it was also applauded beyond the mountains. It has been translated into German, and it was again reprinted at Augsbourg, in 1772, besides the preceding editions. Mgr. Guttilieri, the queen's confessor, said when writing to Alphonso on the 25th of March, 1773, "I must tell you for your consolation, that last year I translated into German, and published at Augsbourg, your work entitled 'The Ecclesiastic instructed on the way to direct souls,' or, 'Instructions for young Confessors,' and all the learned have read it with pleasure." This edition was sold as soon as it was published. The learned priest, Peter Obladen, undertook a fresh edition in the year 1774; and John Herz, preacher and examiner at Augsbourg, enhanced the value of the work by adding the following eulogium to it: "Libellum &c., a reverendissimo et zelosissimo D. Alphonso de Liguorio, episcopo S. Agathæ in regno neapolitano, italice compositum, et post iteratas in hac lingua editiones a R. D. Petro Obladen in linguam germanicam translatum, eo digniorem prælo censeo, quia iis, quibus cura animarum incumbit, non solum multa saluberrima ad praxim, sed et quæ ad ipsius pastoris majorem perfectionem, et concreditarum ovium salutem con-

ducunt, suppeditat." The work was in such demand beyond the mountains, that Remondini got Alphonso to publish it in Latin, which he did under the title of "Homo Apostolicus."

A priest and a Benedictine, both learned men of Florence, happened to meet at a hotel at Terracino with Mgr. Pozzuoli, now bishop of St. Agatha, and then canon penitentiary at Capua; they began to speak of the works on morals in use at Florence: "Amongst us," said they, "your Liguori is highly esteemed, and is in the hands of all," and they never wearied in exalting the extent of his knowledge, the justice of his thoughts, and above all the impartiality of his opinions.

Our Father Don Angelo Marsillo, on going to Corsica to visit the grand-vicar, who was a friend of his, observed a copy of Alphonso's Morals on the table: "There is nothing to surprise you in this," said the grand-vicar to him; "these Morals are the only one made use of in Corsica; he who embarks in this vessel is sure not to be shipwrecked; there is no party-spirit there; all is equity and justice; he hates laxity, and abhors rigorism." A learned Franciscan, remarkable for his distinguished employments, was so full of admiration for Alphonso's wisdom, that he went from Corsica to Naples, and from Naples he went to Nocera to ask his opinion on some difficulties as to morals.

At Bologna, which justly calls itself the interpreter of the canons, these Morals are considered to be the most correct of all. In the cases

of morality resolved by the excellent clergy of this city, may plainly be seen the esteem which is there felt for the opinions of Alphonso, since it is there followed implicitly without ever deviating from it in the slightest degree.

A Master Dominican at Messina, having heard a wicked priest blame this morality, turned towards our Father Pappacena, and said to him, "We must have patience with certain persons who will not study anything and wish to know everything. From my youth I have always defended the Morals of Mgr. Liguori amongst ourselves and amongst strangers. I have recommended it to our young men, if they wish to become good confessors. I have always thought that God would not have left one of His most faithful ministers to himself in the science of morals." In France, where, as is well known, the heresy of Jansenism was erected and established, this Moral Theology is so highly thought of, that it is considered as a compendium of the soundest doctrine. Brother Albert Lansias, an emigrant Frenchman and a Reformed Minor, assured several persons in Naples that it is held in peculiar esteem in France, especially by the priests. When it became known that the Abbé Claude Nonnotte had received letters from Alphonso, several learned men, who had read his Theology, congratulated him on having heen honoured by such a flattering letter.

Some prelates and Spanish Jesuits who came to Rome, united in attesting that in Spain the only work on morals which was in repute, and

followed by the learned, was that of Alphonso. Even the summaries which he composed in Italian were translated into Spanish. The secretary of Cardinal Levizzano said in speaking of Alphonso to the advocate Don Hyacinth Amici, that he had so much credit in Spain, that it might be said that his Morals were everywhere in use. A high personage also said at Rome to our Father Mona, "The sanctity and knowledge of this servant of God excite the admiration of persons of all classes throughout Europe."

This theology is in such esteem in Poland, that there is not a priest who has not got a copy of it. Our Father Holbaur wrote to me from Varsovia, that the most serene prince and bishop of Plocko, the brother of King Stanislaus Augustus, recommended this work as the best of all in his pastoral letter to his clergy in the year 1775. "Inter anctores Theologiæ moralis, præ cæteris enixe commendat opus venerabilis Patris nostri."

Alphonso gained such a high reputation in Germany through this work, that it is generally looked upon there as a rampart against Jansenism, and as the restorer of evangelical morality. When it became known at Vienna that the Life of this servant of God was being printed at Naples, Louis Virginio, the superior of the Italian Church there, wrote to our superior-general on the 8th of October, 1800, saying, "I cannot enough praise God that the Life of this holy prelate is at length going to be put forth.

He was chosen by God to renew the apostolical spirit, and to serve as a bulwark against that rigorism which threatened to make such great ravages throughout all the Church." He was so anxious about it, that he asked for three copies of this Life before it was finished.

Alphonso gained such great celebrity amongst the Germans and other learned people of the north, that as the said Virginio wrote to tell me, "His Moral Theology is so well known and highly thought of in divers parts of Catholic Germany, that there are even some dioceses, such as Servio and Bosnia, where the bishops have adopted it as a text-book in their seminaries."

A German priest, who went to see Rome and Naples, did not forget also to visit Nocera to consult Alphonso on Theology; such was the way in which it was thought of in Germany. The same priest having some time afterwards met our Father Bartholomew Jourdain at Arce, said to him in a tone of regret, "Is it true that Mgr. Liguori retracted? It is of consequence to me to know, because his Morals are so highly esteemed in Germany, that it would be a real overthrow of our ideas if this report be well-founded. My master," continued he, "used to say to me, 'Follow all that Mgr. Liguori teaches in his Morals; follow it blindly and without uneasiness of conscience.'" As to this retractation, the fact was that there were some of Alphonso's opinions which he afterwards retracted after more mature consider-

ation. But as for his system of Morals and his fundamental principles, he maintained them unchanged until death.

This Moral Theology, which was reprinted in Rome in the year 1767, was, according to the words of the editor, spread even beyond the bounds of Europe, and everywhere met with applause. "Extra Europam translata, communique plausu est recepta." To give proofs of this, several priests of the mission of St. Vincent of Paul attested, on their return to Naples and Rome from India, that this work was familiar to the ecclesiastics of that country, and that at Goa especially it was used by all. Even in America, no system of morals is held in higher estimation than that of our blessed father. Don Remondini affirms that he has sent a considerable number of copies to that country. A Franciscan father, who was a postulator at Rome for the cause of the venerable Margillo, on one day hearing the sanctity and learning of Alphonso extolled, assured our Father Don Joseph Cardono that in Mexico it enjoyed a high degree of esteem, and that he was everywhere held in honour on account of his reputation for sanctity.

This Morality not only serves as a guide to confessors, but it also assists bishops to govern over their dioceses properly. Mgr. Basta, the Bishop of Malfi, who was as holy as he was learned, was in the habit of saying that Father Liguori had overthrown Jansenism by bringing opinions to their just value, and that

he had supplied bishops with invaluable assistance.

It is well known what extensive acquirements were possessed by Mgr. Lupoli, the bishop of Cerreto. "I would not venture to exercise the office of bishop," said he, "if I had not got the Morals of Mgr. Liguori, and the Abridgements of Benedict XIV. on my table." His predecessor, Mgr. Pascal, on finding that there was a kind of spirit of rigorism pervading the seminary, did not hesitate to cause Alphonso's Morals to be taught there, in order to counteract it.

Mgr. Minutoli, who was a real ornament of the Oratory at Naples, and who is now bishop of Milet, has always professed the greatest veneration for the person and the doctrine of Alphonso. "During the great number of years that I have been confessor at Naples," he said to us, "I have never made use of any other morals than those of Mgr. Liguori. I defended them at Naples; it is that which I wish the confessors in my diocese to follow, and I follow it myself in the regulation of my diocese. He who takes these Morals as his guide cannot be deceived, because it is the work of a saintly bishop."

Mgr. Ventilli, the bishop of Palignano, wrote to Alphonso, from whom he had received the Morals, in 1733: "I thank God," he says, "for having chosen you to enlighten the holy Church by your doctrine, to edify it by your virtues, to facilitate the government of their dioceses to bishops."

"He cannot be a good confessor," said Mgr. Giacobini, the bishop of Veroli, "nor can he direct souls with security, who has not taken Mgr. Liguori as his guide. His Morality is exempt from all censure, and there is no decision to be found there which has not a solid foundation." Now it is well known how prodigiously learned Mgr. Giacobini was.

I pass over in silence the eulogiums of Mgr. Coppola, the bishop of Castellamare, Mgr. del Sabbatini, the bishop of Aquila, Mgr. Bergame, the bishop of Gaeta, Mgrs. Mastrelli and Zunica, the archbishops of Acerenza and of Matera, as well as those of Cardinal Sersale, the archbishop of Naples, and a hundred other prelates of no less distinguished merit. It is enough to know what a high idea the immortal Benedict XIV. had of Alphonso and of his doctrine. In his work, "De Synodo Dioecesana," he does justice to his merits and speaks of him as *prudens auctor;* and in the second edition of this work published during his pontificate, he names him in the index, saying that he is quoted with praise, "cum laude citatus," which is a thing he has not done for any other author, and when Alphonso dedicated his Morals to him, Benedict XIV. was so pleased at it, and entertained such a high opinion of him, that he never ceased to praise the goodness of his judgment and his rare impartiality.

Father Francis Florent Brunet, the vicar-general of the Fathers of the Mission, has told me, that once in visiting Mgr. Louis Charles

Machault, the bishop of Amiens, at Louvain in 1791, he found him reading these Morals on his knees, and that when the bishop saw him he began to extol the sanctity of Mgr. Liguori and of his numerous works: "Ego infra scriptus vicarius generalis Congregationis missionis, omnibus quorum interest, testificor, mecum Lovanii essem anno 1791, quadam die adiisse et invisisse illustrissimum ac reverendissimum D. dominum Ludovicum de Machault, episcopum Ambianensam, qui tum commorabatur in collegio magno ejusdem urbis Lovaniensis, invenisseque me præfatum D. dominum antistitem legentem opera moralia ven Alphonsi de Liguori, et quidem quantum meminisse possum, ingeniculatum; eumdemque præsulem in laudes et operum personæ prædicti ven de Liguori erupisse. Quorum in fidem dictum testimonium hac die nona Octobris 1802 in ædibus Congregationis missionis Montis Citatorii Romæ subscripsi. Franciscus Florentinus Brunet, Congregationis missionis sacerdos."

Father Foderari, a very excellent subject of the Oratory, said to our Father Pappacena, "I venerate the opinions of Mgr. Liguori, and my conscience is in safety with him; he is a man who wrote on his knees before a crucifix. I study this work on my knees, on account of the profound respect I entertain for its saintly author."

I know that there are censors of this inestimable work; but we also know what made them so. Alphonso undertook to combat the Jansenists, and it is they who were his detractors.

Thus in them this arose rather from rage than from opposition. On seeing that his virtue accredited his doctrine, they trembled from the fear that he might one day be honoured at the altar. In an assembly of ecclesiastics of the same opinions, one of them, who was of high standing, exclaimed, "Let us pray to God that this man who tries to destroy our cause may not be honoured as a saint." In another religious assembly, where the minds of those present were equally tainted by heretical opinions, one of them exclaimed, "If this man becomes a saint we shall be ruined."

A prelate, who taught at Naples, was not ashamed to say to one of us, "I never had any esteem for your congregation, and I have never been able to understand how Mgr. Liguori lived as a saint while he professed such impious doctrines." He spoke thus; but it is well known that after he had outraged all laws, divine and human, he ascended the scaffold in the year 1789, in the public market at Naples, with several traitors of a similar sort: so true it is that Jansenist and Jacobite are one and the same thing.

CHAPTER XXI.

All Alphonso's writings, whether dogmatical, polemical, or ascetical, were equally well received in Italy and throughout all Europe. "I am not

afraid to assert," said a learned Frenchman, "that to cite his works of piety is to pronounce in a few words the greatest eulogium on the talents and on the piety of Mgr. Liguori."

As a great number of these works fell into the hands of Catholics of divers nations, several persons began to translate them, and so they were published in Poland, France, Germany, Spain, and elsewhere, to the great advantage of souls. It is difficult to believe with what avidity they were and are everywhere received. Mgr. Henry Hennequin, canon of the eminent college of St. Bartholomew at Liege, could not refrain from congratulating Alphonso on the great good his ascetical works did in all parts. "I have lived at Rome for a long while," he wrote to him on the 20th of February, 1776; "I have been able to judge for myself both in the court of the penitentiary and elsewhere, the great good which all the works which have issued from the blessed pen of your Lordship continually effect, and particularly your ascetical works, and so I cannot refrain therefore from returning thanks to God for it, and felicitating you upon it also."

"Remondini tells us," Alphonso himself wrote to Father Villani, "that my Morals are much prized by the Germans, as well as my spiritual works. It appears that many of them have been translated into that language. 'Soli Deo honor et gloria.'" When Mgr. Guttielieri once went to see him, he said to him, "The sale of your works is so great in Germany, that even

protestant librarians have had them translated and printed; from whence you may infer what a sale there is for them among Catholics."

From the year 1759 his treatise on the Passion of Jesus Christ was frequently reprinted in German; it was translated by a celebrated Jesuit; it was translated into the Polish tongue in the year 1795, and printed at Varsovia; the edition was sold off as soon as it appeared. "Vix typis impressum comparuit," said our Father Holbaur, "jam turmatim diripitur."

His book entitled The True Spouse, and which was principally intended for nuns, was scarcely published at Naples than a German translation of it appeared, of which there were several editions. In the year 1776, Father Abbé Bernard Hyper, a monk of the monastery of St. Benedict at Wessabrunn, separated the matters of general interest in it from those specially intended for nuns, from the wish to render this work more useful, and he published it in two volumes; the title of the first is, "Vera Spousa," and of the second, "Solida et fundamuntalis institutio pro omnibus iis qui ad perfectionem Christianam tendunt." "This work," said he in the preface, "has been twice republished in Italian in a short space of time, on account of its extreme excellence; besides its containing the quintessence of Mystic Theology, if I may so express myself, it also clearly places before the eyes of both religious and seculars the practice of those virtues which are necessary and proper for each state. I venture to say that one here

finds collected together all that has been said on these subjects by all authors, whether ancient or modern. This work also furnishes a summary of all that this excellent author has himself written on and treated of in a more obscure manner in his other works."

If this work was so much applauded in Germany, it was far more so in Italy. In order to prove this, it will suffice here to cite the great number of editions of it which have appeared at Venice alone. D. Barbara Petra, a Benedictine nun and sister of General Petra, in writing to Mgr. Liguori from Pavia, assured him of the great good his pious works effected there, and of their great sale; she told him that amongst others the True Spouse was in the hands of all the religious, and that it was read in the refectory in her convent.

It is difficult to believe how eagerly the little book on the Visits to the Blessed Sacrament was everywhere sought for. Alphonso himself lived to see twenty-two editions of it at Naples and at Venice. A zealous Jesuit of Mayence made the first translation of it into German in the year 1757. He calls Alphonso, "Virum totum in Jesum Christum veraciter innamoratum." In the year 1769, another edition of it appeared at Cologne. Several were also published in 1772, in France, at Nancy the capital of Lorraine, by Morta, the printer; at Lyons in 1777, by the brothers Perisse, and at Paris by Grapari, together with other spiritual works of the same author. There was a new

edition of it also at Augsbourg, in the year 1779. Our Father Holbaur asserts that this little book was in the hands of everybody in France. "Adeo usu esse in Gallia, Visitationes sanctissimi sacramenti, ut ab oculatis et fide dignis testibus compertum habeo ut fere nemini ignotum sit opusculum istud." D. Bartholomew Genoveso, an emigrant Carthusian, declares that the religious of his order prefer it to any other book of meditation, and that they find in it, as in the manna of old, every flavour they can desire. Our father James Wanelet wrote to tell me, that when he was in Paris four years before the revolution, he saw several new editions of this work.

Canon Hennequin, in informing Alphonso himself that divers translations of his works had been made, particularly refers to this book of the Visits. "It would not have been fair," said he, "for Italy alone to possess such a precious treasure, so the French, with a holy jealousy, have published three consecutive editions of it. The Germans in turn have twice reprinted this same work, and I, for the greater glory of God, have felt it a duty to have it reprinted here, (at Liege,) and two thousand copies of it have already issued from the press. This little book is an admirable assistance to the universal propagation of the perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, which has already been spread through this vast diocese, in Flanders, and in many provinces of the empire."

This little book of the Visits enjoys no less high a reputation in Poland. As it could not satisfy the devotion of persons of all classes who were not familiar with the languages into which it was translated, a father of our congregation made a Latin translation of it, which was published in 1800, that it might be spread throughout Switzerland and Germany.

This golden little book was also in general use in Spain. Don Louis Virginio, the superior of the Italian church at Vienna, has written to tell me that there was a Spanish lady of high rank who met with this little book there, and was so much delighted by the unction she found in it that she bought several copies of it: nothing more was needed in order to cause the work to be translated into Spanish, and circulated throughout the kingdom. "The numerous editions which are published," said a learned Frenchman, "prove both the merit of the author and the approbation of a virtuous public." In Italy there is hardly any librarian who has not reprinted it on his own account. At Rome especially there have been editions of it of all descriptions, and we may safely say that the work is in general use, even among the cardinals. The Holy Father Pius VI. derived such pleasure from it, that he always had it on his table.

Canon Hennequin undertook to translate several of his other works, in order to second the efforts of Alphonso's zeal, and he carried his intentions into execution. "As soon as time will admit of it," he wrote to him, "I hope to com-

mence another of your Lordship's works, which is no less important and necessary than the first; it is the Preparation for Death, or in other words, Eternal Truths. It is indeed a holy book and indispensable for these unhappy times, when people no longer seem to believe in anything. I hope to do the same as regards the True Spouse of Jesus Christ. It is an inestimable book, in which the practice of virtue is admirably set forth."

Father Walfrino, a Franciscan, translated Alphonso's Sermons into German in 1775. John Herz, a canon of the college of St. Gertrude at Augsbourg, and counsellor of this bishopric and of the archbishopric of Treves, gave his approbation to it in these terms: "Conciones has reverentissimi Alphonsi de Liguori, episcopi ad Sanctam Agatham, delectu materiarum perutiles et magna eruditionis sacræ copia abundantes." The same collection of Sermons was translated into the Polish language by the priest Don Thomas Waluszen, and printed at Varsovia in the year 1789. He dedicated it to the most serene prince and bishop of Samogitia, Stephen John Giedroye. He thus expresses himself in the preface: "Opus istud non tam verborum et eloquentiæ ornata quam potius sententiarum, et rerum singulari selectu eximium, atque raro auctoris zelo spirans et pluribus aliis operibus mundo christiano optime noti. Toto tempore quo in cathedra Samocitiensi verbi Dei prædicator existebam, magno mihi fuit adjumento; alte resonabat, resonabat per Italiam Ligori nomine decoratum: altius nunc etiam in patria nostra,

tuo in natione nostra magno nomini dedicatum."

The treatise addressed to sovereigns was spread throughout all countries as soon as it appeared. The editor, who published a new edition of it at Liege, in 1778, announced that it was being sold at Rome, Madrid, Brussels, Vienna, and Austria.

Peter Obladen translated The Glories of Mary into German in the year 1775; in his eulogium on this work, he said, "In præsentibus paginis conspicies Ligorium comparentem in publico ut encomiasten et panegyricum Mariæ B. B. Virginis et Matris Redemptoris nostri. Elegantissime textus scripturæ sacræ, antiquorum Ecclesiæ Patrum, sublimes ideæ ipsiusmet auctoris, et penetrabiles ejusmet sententiæ et expressiones quæ in hisce sermonibus occurrunt, dilucide demonstrant tenerrimum cor Ligorii in devotione erga Dei matrem."

I have also heard that The History of Heresies, The Truth of the Faith, The Way of Salvation, The Practice of Love towards Jesus Christ, The Great Means of Prayer, The Preparation for Death, The Considerations and Affections on the Passion of Jesus Christ, The Eternal Truths, The Duties of a Christian, &c. have been translated into Polish and German. Peter Obladen also translated two volumes of Meditations into German, and dedicated them to the most serene Princess Cunegonde, daughter of Augustus, King of Poland.

An Augustinian father, on coming from In-

dia to Rome about the year 1788, in order to assist at a general chapter of his order, eagerly sought for a complete edition of the works of Mgr. Liguori. For this purpose he went to our house of St. Julian of the Mountains, and inquired of our Father Lacerra where he could procure them. He told him that Alphonso enjoyed great celebrity in India, and that he wished to provide himself with a great many copies of his writings, to translate them into the language of the people. Not being able to meet with all the works at Rome he went to Naples, where he bought them in great quantities.

Our Father D. Gaetan Mancusi assures me, that he once met with a learned and literary Frenchman, who was also seeking for all the works of Alphonso; he told him that the writings of Mgr. Liguori were much esteemed in France, and that he sought to collect as many of them as he possibly could.

Father D. Romuald Maria Roberti, of the Fathers of the Mission, wrote to our Father D. Bartholomew Corrado at Rome, saying, "You cannot imagine what applause this saintly prelate has everywhere obtained by his holiness and his learning; unspeakable good is derived from his works; I do not believe that there is any ascetical writer who has enjoyed so high a reputation, and whose books have been so often reprinted." A publisher at Macerata told me that he derived more money from the sale of the works of Mgr. Liguori alone than from that of all the other books in his shop, although it

was one of the most considerable at Ancona. This esteem for the writings of Alphonso was truly wonderful. Remondini of Venice went so far as to write to him, "If you have but one page fit for printing, send it to me." This high opinion of himself and of his writings was carried so far even beyond the mountains, that the librarians, on seeing with what eagerness his works were sought after, printed books under his name which were not written by him, as our Father Holbaur wrote me word, "Tanto existimatio venerabilis Ligorii in Germania præsertim viget, ut aliqua opuscula pietatis præcipue sub ementito Ligorii nomine passim in lucem edere auserint, convicti de certissima et subitanea venditione quorumvis operum nomine Ligorii insignitorum."

Let us conclude this chapter by an eulogium on a work of Alphonso's of which we have not yet spoken. It was published in 1762 under the title of The Truth of the Faith made manifest by the Motives of Credibility. It obtained the admiration of all zealous Catholics. John Baptist Gori speaks of it thus: "The author here sums up with admirable brevity the most extensive as well as the most interesting matters. The dialogue which terminates it is equally worthy of its saintly author."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE last work which Alphonso published was that entitled "The Fidelity of Subjects towards God," &c.

The authority of his director, Father Villani, was needed in order to make him put an end to his publications. However, his state of health did not admit of his continuing to compose. "I feel really ill," he wrote to Father de Paul at Frosinone, on the 2nd of January, 1777: "I can no longer either read or write; I have a constant pain in my head, which has obliged me to give up every sort of study." However he published a little treatise which he composed by way of relaxation, as he assured Father Villani, and which he had distributed during the course of the missions. He summed up in them in a few lines these two counsels, which are the most useful to all Christians, viz. "The necessity of prayer, and of the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary." He there proves that prayer is necessary in order to obtain eternal life; that besides the general assistance which we require in order to persevere in grace, we also require particular assistance; that he who does not pray does not obtain it, and that God cannot refuse it to those who ask Him for it with humility and perseverance; that we are bound to pray, even under pain of mortal sin, specially when we are

in danger of death or of sinking under temptation. "He who prays," he said in conclusion, "will be saved, and he who does not pray will be damned." After prayer, he enforces peculiar devotion to the Blessed Virgin. "He who has not this devotion," said he, "cannot persevere in good and overcome the devil without great difficulty, as the Divine Mother is called the mother of perseverance."

He once happened to meet with a little treatise on the Sacrifice of the Mass which pleased him, and he added a short explanation of the prayers of mass to it, which was no less useful to the priest than to the faithful.

In a letter to a young man on the spiritual exercises, he shows how God communicates Himself to the soul when in retreat, and the great blessings which are to be derived from it. He also put together in a little book the most striking thoughts on eternal truths for an eight days' exercise.

We have also some precious admonitions of his, addressed to the young seminarists; he there proves wherein true knowledge consists: "Ah! how many men are there," said he, "who think much of themselves, because they are acquainted with mathematics, literature, foreign languages, ancient history, &c.; acquirements which are of no use for the good of religion, and avail nought for their salvation." He therefore exhorted them not to make slighter efforts to advance in virtue than in knowledge, so that they might at the same time become useful to themselves and to others also.

We fortunately possess a reply which Alphonso gave to a young man who asked his advice on the state of life he ought to choose. He wishes that he should make his decision by considering the immortality of the soul and the only end for which God has placed him in the world; that he should place the hour of death before his eyes, and that he should embrace the state which he would wish to have chosen at that moment. He then proposes the religious state to him, as that which is the safest on account of the powerful aids to salvation which it furnishes, whilst the world on the contrary is full of dangers. He above all wishes him to choose a monastery where the rule is vigorously observed. "If you wish to enter where they lead an easy life," said he, "you had better remain at home; for you would endanger your soul by joining a relaxed community."

Alphonso has also left us exhortations addressed to religious, in order to animate them to follow after the perfection of their state; he examines the end for which God has taken them out of the world, sets forth the infidelity of many to the grace of their vocation, and proposes the methods by which they may recover fervour and make up for the time which has been lost.

He composed several treatises of the same sort, amongst others the following: "Admonitions to a young lady in deliberation as to the choice of a state of life." He there sets forth the heroism of so many young virgins who

have bid adieu to the world that they might consecrate themselves to Jesus Christ. He extols the religious state, and highly exalts holy virginity, which he contrasts with the miseries of the married state, and the dangers which belong to it. He also there treats of the confidence which one must feel as to salvation by serving Jesus Christ in the cloister, and of the fear one ought to entertain of being lost by living in the world. "Every married woman," he said in conclusion, "may be called a martyr of patience, that is to say, if she has patience; otherwise, she will suffer a martyrdom in this world, and eternal martyrdom in the next."

He also wrote a familiar discourse to a young person before taking the religious habit. He there shows the dangers to which one is exposed in the world, and the graces which one receives from God in the religious state; he exhorts the young virgin to persevere in her vocation, and sets before her the methods of corresponding to so great a grace.

His exhortations to a religious to advance in the love of her Divine Spouse, contain in a concise form all that can excite a person consecrated to God, to triumph over all that is opposed to her sanctification. The means which he enjoins on her for that end, are, firstly, meditation on the passion of Jesus Christ: "A Love," said he, "which does not spring from a consideration of the sufferings of Jesus Christ for us can be but feeble." Secondly, the read-

ing of pious books: "In prayer," said he, "we speak to God, and in reading, it is God who speaks to us." Thirdly, frequent communion, and he enlarges on this head as to the needful dispositions for it. Finally, and above all, he enforces perfect conformity to the will of God. A nun who belongs wholly to God," said he, "complains of nothing, is contented with all, loves the rule, and manifests no repugnance to any sort of employment."

From the wish to cause the love of Jesus Christ to increase more and more in religious houses, he in another treatise exhorts them to have prayer in common before the Blessed Sacrament: "Although our Blessed Saviour," said he, "is always ready to hear those who pray to Him, yet He dispenses His graces more abundantly in the Blessed Sacrament." He was not at all satisfied with these prayers, and he wished there should always be a nun who should remain before the tabernacle to converse with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

He also left divers other instructions on religious perfection. He sums them up in twelve maxims; for the ground-work of all perfection he requires that we should have an entire confidence in God and a total mistrust of ourselves; then, that we should avoid every deliberate fault, and take care not to be disturbed by our falls; but he wishes that we should humble ourselves for them, make a resolution of amendment, and have recourse to God with confidence; that we should be detached from all our relations, and

from everything else, and rejoice at being despised; that we should cherish the desire of advancing in the love of God; that we should frequently offer ourselves to Him, and unite our will to His under all trials; that we should observe the rule; that we should obey superiors and our spiritual father; that God should always be present to us, and that we should often form the intention of acting in order to please Him. "A good intention," said he, "is the spiritual alchemy which changes the most common actions into gold."

In his counsels to the nuns of the most Holy Redeemer of Scala and of St. Agatha, he earnestly exhorts them to love the life in community, to avoid the introduction of abuses against the rule, and to renew their vows every time they communicate; to be attentive to labour at the hours mentioned for it, and not to introduce figured chanting into the church, still less music: "The nun who sings figured music," said he, "causes temptation rather than devotion." He wished them to accept every sort of employment with submission, and that they should entirely confide the care of the nieces they might have in the convent to the mistress appointed by the community; that they should not write any letter without showing it to the superioress, who was also to read the answers. Entering after this into details of still higher perfection, he inculcated prayer and ejaculatory petitions; he required that the annual retreat and that of each month should never be neglected, as he was above

all desirous that each one should strive to advance in the love of Jesus Christ, by meditating on the love He has shown towards us by His Passion, and in the Blessed Sacrament, without however ever forgetting devotion to the Blessed Virgin. "The nun," said he, "who does not love the Mother of God with a spiritual love, loves Jesus Christ but little, and has much cause to fear as regards her salvation."

In another treatise he gives numerous counsels to a desolate soul, in order to console her and inspire her with confidence. He advises exact obedience to her spiritual director, to receive all that tries her from the hands of God, to be humble and resigned in illness, to offer herself frequently and unreservedly to God, and to meditate on Jesus crucified on Calvary, and annihilated, as it were, in the eucharist; finally, to be constant in prayer. "There is nothing," said he, in conclusion, "which unites a soul more to God than desolations, because in desolation the acts of conformity to the will of God are more pure and more perfect than at other times."

He was also interested as to the fate of those under condemnation, and collected together in a little treatise various counsels for the priests who visit them. He mentions the temptations to which these unfortunate beings are subject, such as that of nourishing hatred against their accusers or their judges, of believing themselves hated by God and unworthy of pardon, or of considering God as a tyrant who created

them for hell; and he suggested remedies to be used against these or like temptations.

In another treatise are to be found all the counsels which the preacher ought to give his audience on the necessity of prayer, the shunning occasions of sin, and the great misery of those numerous souls who do not confess all their sins through shame; he there especially shows how much love towards Jesus Christ and devotion to the Blessed Virgin must be insisted on.

In a little book of but a few pages, he supplies confessors of moderate attainments with very important assistance for the exercise of their sacred ministry. This treatise is as divine as it is small, and breathes throughout of heavenly wisdom.

As I have a great devotion for the souls in Purgatory, I drew his attention to the fact, that amongst all the works he had written in honour of the saints, there was nothing with peculiar reference to the souls in Purgatory; he immediately began to compose a short novena for them, in which he praises this devotion very much, and exhorts the faithful to practise it.

Perhaps the last of Alphonso's treatises was that with the title of "Divine Love and the Methods of Acquiring it." He there shows how much God wishes us to love Him, and the happiness with which He rewards those who love Him. The methods he gives for acquiring this love are, detachment from earthly things, frequent remembrance of the Passion of Jesus

Christ and of His love for us in the blessed Sacrament, conformity to the will of God, and the love and practice of prayer. "The whole life of the saints," said he, "has been a life of prayer, and all the graces which have rendered them saints, were only received by them through meditation and prayer." These are the principal treatises of this saintly author. There were a great many others, but it would take up too much space to specify them here.

RICHARDSON AND SON, DERBY.

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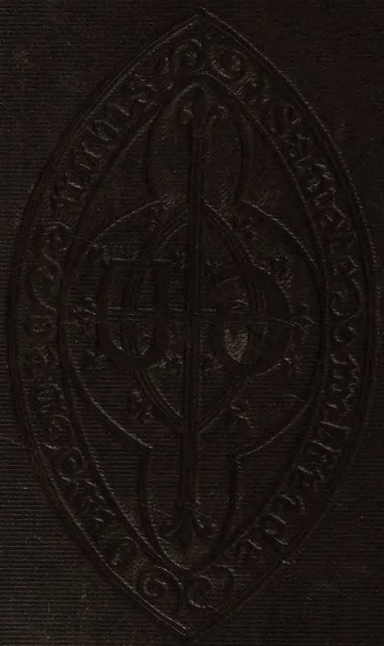
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